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THE EMANCIPATION OF ENGLISH WOMEN

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By

W. LYON BLEASE

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"What do you know of me, Philip, except that I'm o marry you?"

JOHN MASEFIELD'S *Pompey the Great*, Act I.

New and Revised Edition

K-7-77

LONDON
DAVID NUTT
GRAPE STREET, NEW OXFORD STREET, W.C.
1913

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To
MARY CECILIA BLEASE
My Mother
To
MARY ADELAIDE BROADHURST
My Friend
And to
MARGARET MILNE FARQUHARSON
My Critic.

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INTRODUCTION

I HAVE attempted to describe in the following pages part of the long struggle which women have made for their emancipation. I make no claim for impartiality, if by impartiality is meant want of sympathy with either side in the contest. I believe that the great change in the position of women, which is called the feminist movement, is, and has always been, on the whole good, and that the opposition to the various phases of it is, and has always been, on the whole, bad. This conviction, which has been produced as much by the study of historical material as by personal contact with the male ego, must inevitably have tinged this book. But I do not feel that I have therein departed from the strict duty of an historian. I am far from believing that a historian should make no attempt to preach a gospel; indeed, I can conceive no other reason why history should ever be written than that the author desires to establish some permanent good thing in the minds of his readers. It is as much his duty, as it is that of every other person who publishes his opinions, to pronounce judgment upon events, and upon those who take part in them,

in accordance with his own ideas of right and wrong. As it is his duty to provide the materials from which others may fashion opinions of their own, he must be careful, above all other writers, to be sound in his ideals and diligent in his investigations. He is bound always to be accurate in the statement of fact, generous in the contemplation of error, and temperate in the imputation of motive. But he commits a grave breach of duty if he contents himself with merely recording the passage of events in time. No man is so powerless for good as he who has no preference. It is, therefore, with no profession of being a cold and uninterested observer, that I have written this history of the emancipation of English women. I believe in the right of the women to arrange their own lives, and to enjoy equal opportunities with men in all kinds of social activity, and it is in the hope of helping them to exercise that right that I have undertaken this work.

No argument is so common on the lips of the opponents of Woman Suffrage as that women cannot be emancipated, for they have never been slaves. Those who make this statement can have little knowledge of the facts of history. I shall show in these pages that, so far from having enjoyed freedom, women have for more than two hundred years been struggling against the egoism of the male sex; that the inferiority which want of physical strength has imposed upon them has been aggravated by religion, by law, and by custom;

that they have had to contend, always against the indifference, often against the active prejudice, contempt, and jealousy of men to obtain education, proprietary rights, opportunity to labour at any save inferior occupations, and the elementary rights of free persons in a modern State; and that this stupid and brutal repression, even though it has more often arisen from ignorance than from malice, has been productive of disastrous moral, intellectual and physical consequences. The emancipation has been far more of the spirit than of the body. Bondage is not less real because it is not enforced by whips and chains. Those who deny that women as a class have ever experienced bondage are entirely ignorant of the psychology of subjection. The feminist movement consists in the slow and reluctant recognition by man of the fact that woman is not merely an appendage to himself, but a separate individual, entitled to all the opportunities which her natural powers enable her to employ. The first stages of the movement were desperately slow. Before men could be expected to recognize that women had a point of view of their own, it was necessary for that fact to be brought home to women themselves. So long, therefore, as women were carefully educated to believe in their complete dependence upon men, it was impossible that the vast majority of them should not believe that to be their natural condition. A large portion of this volume will therefore deal with the education of women. Until it is clearly perceived how forcibly

the idea of inferiority has been impressed upon the minds of young girls, it is impossible to understand what is meant by the terms "subjection" and "emancipation" in connection with the history of the female sex. I have attempted little in the way of anticipation. To what changes in the social structure, in political institutions, and in family life the free expression of the opinions of women will ultimately lead us, I cannot tell. For the present I am content to work for the removal of all the impediments which now prevent that free expression. As to what lies beyond, I have seen something of the new women, and I am not afraid.

THE EMANCIPATION OF ENGLISH WOMEN

CHAPTER I

FROM THE RESTORATION TO 1750

AT the end of the seventeenth century the condition of English women seems to have been at its worst. Between the Restoration and the Revolution the ideal of womanhood sank rapidly and continuously. During the reigns of Elizabeth and the first two Stuarts it was probably higher than it ever had been before or has since been until a generation ago. The strong and resolute women, whose names are scattered over the pages of the records of the Civil War, were bred in no mean school. To find their equal we must turn to the bloody annals of the rise of the Dutch Republic and the French Revolution. Their natural fortitude was confirmed by a generous education. The contemplation of the great examples of antiquity, often united with an intimate acquaintance with affairs of State, gave them a breadth of view, a soundness of judgment, and a readiness of decision,

which enabled them in many a desperate crisis not only to show patience and fortitude, but even to take active and commanding parts in military operations. But for more than a century no other great woman appeared in England. Between the names of Lucy Hutchinson and Elizabeth Fry there is not one in history which is fit company for either.

The Church and the Law had long combined to keep women in a state of subordination, but the dissolution of social responsibility which followed the Restoration thrust them below the level of both. So far as women were concerned, fashionable society relapsed into a condition of barbarism. Women were no longer regarded as companions in serious affairs, but only as creatures of animal passion. For the first time in English history they became the object not of the impassioned poetry of love, but of foul and insolent lampoons; and no better indication of the change in the ideal of womanhood could be found than the contrast between the verses of Sidney and Spenser on the one hand, and those of the post-Restoration authors, from Rochester to Pope, on the other. Sensuality produced a general and all-pervading contempt for the understanding and character of women, and the notorious passages in the *Letters* of Lord Chesterfield probably represent the opinions of nine out of every ten of the gentlemen of the period.[1]

[1] See the *Letters* of the 5th September, 1748; 27th September, 1748; 19th December, 1749. "Women, then, are only children of a larger growth. . . . A man of sense only

It would be unjust to suppose that the frantic dissoluteness of the Court of Charles II was accompanied by a corresponding change all over the country. In many parts of England, especially in those districts where Puritanism had been the deliberate choice of a sturdy and self-reliant people, and not a burdensome yoke imposed by a detested Government, the new things in the capital must have been abhorred, so far as they were known. There was abundant scope in England for the practice of the homely virtues. In such places as these there can have been no brutalization of women. But even among people of temperate and sober conduct their liberty was no doubt severely restricted. The Puritan had generally a profound belief in the Bible as a guide for daily life; and the most zealous sectary who ever smote the Amalekites in battle would be pretty certain to impress upon his women folk the Christian virtues of meekness,

trifles with them, plays with them, humours and flatters them, as he does with a sprightly, forward child." Compare Pope's *Epistle to a Lady*, and his *Thoughts on Various Subjects*. There is a delightful passage in Coke's *Dectection of the Court and State of England* (1694), which I cannot refrain from quoting. His eighth "expedient by which the English nation may be secured against the growing greatness of the French and Dutch" is "That the drudgeries of Drawers and Tapsters in Taverns and Ale-houses, be performed by women, and that the men may seek better Imployments! I am sure that they cannot be worse imployed." This readiness to give women the dirty work of the world is a characteristic piece of egoism. I should like to quote one or two comical passages in Cosmo III's *Tour* of 1669, but I fear that they are too long.

resignation, and submission to authority. If among people of rank and fashion the licentiousness of the time made a Court lady little better than a wealthy prostitute, among those of more decent behaviour the authority of Holy Writ deprived women of much of their natural strength and understanding. The Hebraic ideal of women was not high, and the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Paul did nothing to elevate it. Every text which instructed a woman that she was made for man, that she must submit herself to her husband, that she must not speak in the assembly, that she must learn in silence with all subjection, and that she was the weaker vessel, when translated into the practice of ordinary life, discouraged all independent thought and action, and deprived women of half the aids to wisdom and virtue.

So John Evelyn, the type of all that was best in Restoration England, lamented the decay of the old ideals. In those days "men courted and chose their wives for their modesty, frugality, keeping at home," good housewifery, and other economical virtues then in reputation; and the young damsels were taught all these in the country and at their parents' houses. . . . The virgins and young ladies of that golden age *quæsiverunt lanam et linum*, put their hands to the spindle nor disdained they the needle; were obsequious and helpful to their parents, instructed in the managery of the family, and gave presages of making excellent wives. Their retirements were devout and religious books, and their recreations in the

distillatory, the knowledge of plants and their virtues for the comfort of their poor neighbours and use of their family, which wholesome, plain diet and kitchen physic preserved in plain health." There is room here for everything except the intellect; much patient and unquestioning drudgery, but not a hint of employment of the higher faculties. The boundary which separated the young lady from the domestic servant was perilously slight.[1]

Puritanism is generally associated with hardness of life and personal responsibility, and in times of stress the Puritan women might display a stoutness

[1] Compare the passages in Milton's *Paradise Lost*:—

For contemplation he and valour formed;
For softness she, and sweet attractive grace;
He for God only, she for God in him:
Book IV, 299–301.

To whom thus Eve, with perfect beauty adorned:
"My author and disposer, what thou biddest
Unargued I obey: so God ordains;
God is thy law, thou mine: to know no more,
Is woman's happiest knowledge, and her praise."
Ibid., 635–9.

"For well I understand in the prime end
Of nature her the inferior, in the mind
And inward faculties, which most excel;
In outward also her resembling less
His image who made both, and less expressing
The character of that dominion given
O'er other creatures."
Book VIII, 538–44.

Is there not a direct connection between these lines and Milton's cruelty to his own daughters?

and courage equal to that of men. The annals of Monmouth's rebellion contain few more honourable names than those of Alice Lisle and Elizabeth Gaunt, and even they were not superior to the host of nameless women who have braved the perils of the backwoods of America. But from the beginning of the eighteenth century to its close, women in England had little opportunity for the exercise of boldness and resolution, and they would be directed to obey Saint Peter and Saint Paul more often than encouraged to emulate Miriam and Deborah. The excesses of the capital would tend to emphasize this unnatural restraint. The debauchery which was associated with the learning of the period produced a strong reaction against any movement in favour of its revival among women. Liberty was inevitably confounded with license, and freedom of thought with immorality. When knowledge is generally accompanied by vice, the enemies of vice seldom fail to become the enemies of knowledge. Puritan fathers did not encourage their daughters to face the world ; they carefully secluded them. Two opposed tendencies thus warred against improvement in the condition of women. For success in the world of fashion, nothing was required but a fine face and a smart tongue. In the world which was not fashionable, the precepts of orthodox religion, impressing the qualities of submissiveness and dependence upon women, were strengthened by a dislike of the liberal education which alone could enable women to help themselves.

In practically every quarter they were placed at a disadvantage.

It is impossible to doubt that at this time the ordinary man's opinion of a woman was that she was a mere associate for himself, that apart from her relations with him she had no interests, and that her own wishes were never to be gratified when they happened to conflict with his. Her relationship with men being the only important fact in her life, she was always regarded from this single point of view. She was enveloped in an atmosphere of sex. Men acted as statesmen, soldiers, merchants, professional men, tradesmen, and labourers. Women were wives, widows, or "old maids." In conventional thought, what was secondary in men was primary in women; marriage and parentage were incidents in the one sex, and essentials in the other. So far, therefore, as was possible, all occupations but that of maternity were closed to women. Among the poorer classes they perforce engaged in manual labour of one sort or another. But wherever education enabled men to form definite ideals of the sphere of woman, and economic conditions made it possible to realize them, all women were strictly confined to the performance of the duties of sex. Individuality was entirely suppressed, and no account was taken of any intellectual faculty. Motherhood was not suitable to all women. But whether they were fitted for motherhood or not, they must assume its duties or they failed in life. To an "old maid" was

assigned, in the next world, the duty of leading apes in Hell.[1] A respectable woman was nothing but the potential mother of children.

Out of this purely egoistical conception of womanhood had been developed the whole of her status in civil and canon law. The final test of a man's opinion of woman is the position which he assigns to her in the most intimate of her possible relations with himself. He may regard a wife simply as subjected to his animal instincts. He may regard her as a minister to his wants and necessities, created only for the purpose of diverting him in his troubles, and bound, in all matters in which they are jointly concerned, to submit her will to his. He may regard her as a partner and companion, entitled equally with himself to consideration in their common business, to be consulted by him in great things rather than in little, one from whom he may seek consolation in adversity, not as from a humble dependant, but as from a friend strong in counsel. The higher the place assigned to the wife, and the more generous her treatment, the nobler will be the conduct of the husband towards the whole sex to which she belongs.

It is not too bold to assert that at the beginning of the eighteenth century the ideal of marriage had been brought to its lowest possible level. So far as opinion was expressed at all, it emphasised the sexual side of the connection, and almost entirely disregarded the spiritual. The most significant

[1] Otway's *Soldier's Fortune*, Act i., Scene 2.

proof of this statement is the age at which girls were thought fit for marriage. At the age of fourteen the formation of character has hardly begun; intellect and emotions are alike undeveloped, reason and judgment can hardly be said to exist. Even before the seventeenth century common sense had imposed very prudent restrictions upon the legal powers of persons under twenty-one years of age. But throughout that century, and for some time after, custom permitted a girl to do with her own person what she could not do with her own property. There is a curious treatise entitled *A Discourse of Marriage and Wiving*, and dated 1615, which has been preserved in the Harleian Miscellany. In chapter v. the author considers "What years are most convenient for marriage," and states that "The forward virgins of our age are of opinion that . . . fourteen is the best time of their age, if thirteen be not better than that; and they have for the most part the example of their mothers before them." That this is not merely the exaggeration of a satirist is shown by events of a much later date. Mary, the eldest daughter of Charles I, was born in 1631, and married in 1641. Queen Mary II was married at fourteen years of age, and the Duchess of Monmouth at thirteen. This barbarous practice was not confined to the Royal Family. Mrs. Evelyn was married at twelve; Mrs. Pepys at fifteen; the daughter of Sir Simon D'Ewes at fourteen; Frances, Countess of Hertford, at fourteen; Rachel, daughter of Lord

Russell the patriot, at fourteen. In Scotland, heiresses were frequently married before they were twelve. The usual age of marriage was probably about seventeen, and it was not greatly increased until the middle of the eighteenth century. The heroines of contemporary literature are almost invariably studies of immature girlhood. We know that Smollett's "Lady of Quality" (Lady Vane), received proposals of marriage at the age of twelve, and his Emilia and his Lydia Melford could hardly have been more than a year or two older at the same stage of their careers.[1] These girls could offer none of the qualities which dignify and ennoble marriage. In the majority of such cases the attraction must have been purely sensual, and all sorts of disastrous consequences followed. Immature mistresses of households were thrust into responsible positions at an age when even the best education could have given them no real power to fill them, their children died in the midst of luxury as slum children die to-day,[2] and their husbands, weary of minds which were but barren reflections of their own, when the first glamour had disappeared,

[1] Evelyn's *Diary* (1827), I, xxxvii.; Weld's *History of the Royal Society* (1848), I, 295; *Autobiography of Sir Simon D'Ewes* (1845), I, 175; Chambers' *Domestic Annals of Scotland* (1858), II, 250, 251; Lamont's *Diary* (1830), 12; *The Guardian*, No. 7, by Steele. In 1681 the wife of the Governor of Edinburgh Castle was "a child not above fourteen years old" (*Select Biographies*, Wodrow Society, 1847, II, 357).

[2] Evelyn, for instance, had six sons and three daughters. Five of the sons died before they were three years old.

sought refreshment in the society of other women. If well-ordered marriage and the careful instruction of children are the first essentials of stability, then these child-marriages would account for part, at least, of the rottenness of the next two generations of English men and women of rank.[1]

The debasement of women which was implied in these conventional ideas about marriage, was more definitely expressed in the law. When a woman married, she ceased to have a separate legal existence. Her individuality was merged in that of her husband. If she were injured, the wrong was his no less than hers, and he must join in the claim for remedy. If she committed a wrong, he was to blame, and the injured party might take proceedings against him. He was liable, indeed, for civil offences committed by his wife in precisely the same way as he was liable for the acts of his horse or his dog. Some rights she had which his animals had not. He could not kill her. But it was only in the reign of Charles II that his right to beat his wife, hitherto recognized by both civil and canon law, was first questioned. In the matter of proprietary rights the subjection of the woman was equally marked. He became entitled to all her real property during their joint lives, and if an heir had been born, he held it for his own life, even

[1] Defoe has some wise observations on child-marriages and uneducated wives in his *Complete English Tradesman*. His arguments would apply with equal force to people of rank and wealth.

if she died before him. Her personal property, her money, jewels, plate, furniture, and stocks and shares, became his on the marriage, and he could dispose of them as he pleased. If she happened to earn her own living by some industry, there was nothing in the law which prevented him from selling the tools of her trade and appropriating the purchase money for his own use. She might make a will of any property which he chose to leave at her disposal, but she could only make it with his consent, and he could revoke the consent at any time before probate was granted, even after her death. The wife was thus stripped of everything which would enable her to act as a free agent.

Over the children of the marriage she had no control. The husband had the custody of them in law, and might transfer it, if he pleased, from himself to his kept mistress; he prescribed their education; he settled their religious belief. If she made an agreement with him before the marriage that they should be brought up in her faith the agreement was void. He might set it aside at any time, and if she took legal proceedings to enforce it, she was reminded by the judge that by the law of England, by the law of Christianity, and by the constitution of society, whenever there was a dispute between husband and wife, it was the duty of the wife to submit to the husband.[1] The husband, in law, was king in his own

[1] Vice-Chancellor Malins, *in re* Agar-Ellis (1877), Law Reports, 10 Chancery Division, p. 49.

domain, and no Court would interfere with his exercise of his jurisdiction.[1] Under no circumstances was the wife allowed to assert her own opinions. If her inability to obtain the necessaries of life did not compel her to submit, the law would be brought into play; and if she escaped from his house, she could be forced to return on pain of imprisonment. The husband was the captain, and the wife the first mate, and even in matters which concerned her own liberty, or the children whom she had born and nourished, any attempt on her part to question his authority was only evidence of a base, unworthy, and mutinous disposition.[2] But unwilling obedience in particular cases was not the worst consequence of the subjection of the wife. It meant the annihilation of her individuality. Law, religion, and custom were alike indifferent whether the wife loved and honoured her husband, so long as she fulfilled her promise to obey him; ignoring the fact that if he exacted the full measure of the first part of the compact, he was seldom likely to obtain much satisfaction of the other two. Marriage, indeed, was not so much a partnership between two persons of equal worth, united by mutual trust and mutual respect, as an intellectual despotism, in which the physical superiority of one member of the associa-

[1] Lord Justice James, in the same case. This case is still good law, and binding on every Court in the kingdom except the House of Lords.

[2] See the ludicrous passage in Sir James Fitz-James Stephen's *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* (1871), p. 233.

tion was made the basis of the spiritual degradation of the other. Such a condition could only be procured at the cost of the free development of the wife's character, and her reduction to the level of a pupil, forced to imbibe without question the opinions of her superior. Many men would, in varying degrees, rise superior to the law. But as the law existed, it gave every opportunity to a disposition to tyranny. Marriage at its worst was no better than slavery. At its best it was subjection tempered by generosity; the most degrading and precarious of all social conditions.[1]

In return for the complete surrender of her property, her person, and her mind, which a woman made on her marriage, it is true that she acquired certain advantages. Her husband was bound to give her sufficient food, clothes, and lodging. If she injured a neighbour, he might be cast in damages. She could not be made bankrupt, and he was liable for her debts. Under certain circumstances she might even commit serious crimes in his presence without being liable to punishment, the law presuming that she was acting under his compulsion. The total of these privileges was absurd enough. Maintenance was a natural and frequently an entirely inadequate return for the loss of her

[1] Thackeray's *Barry Lyndon* is a very fair representation of what might be lawfully done by a husband to his wife, until the year 1870. Richardson's *Pamela* regarded marriage as "a kind of state of humiliation for a woman," a very accurate estimate of her own condition and that of most married women of her day (*Pamela*, Letter cxxxiv).

property and the performance of her household duties. The rest amounted to nothing more than this; if she chose to cheat her creditors or to injure her neighbours, she could escape punishment, and might even involve her husband in penalties. They might be of some advantage to a woman of bad character. To an honest and respectable woman they were worth nothing at all. But upon these flimsy foundations legal optimists, from Blackstone down to Dr. Heber Hart, have based a contention that the law has been generous to English women.

The legal subjection of wives to their husbands was no isolated phenomenon. In the same hypertrophied egoism of the male were rooted two abuses of a yet more horrible kind, both of which flourish, though less widely, at the present day. The first was what is known as the double standard of morality, which is not so much the reprobation of unchastity in women as the toleration of it in men. The second was the deliberate discouragement of feminine education. A complete indifference to the interests of women, wherever they conflicted with those of men, was inevitably united with a complete indifference to the development in women of those faculties which would enable them to make use of themselves apart from men.

The observance of the double standard of morality is still common enough, though the offences of adultery and seduction have come to be regarded as serious, even in men. At the

beginning of the eighteenth century adultery in the fashionable world was a matter for jest rather than for censure, and seduction a not ungraceful accomplishment in a man of good breeding. So much has already been written on this topic that nothing more need be said here. But one published work contains so remarkable a proof of the sexual degradation of the women of the time, that a passage from it must be quoted in full. At the present day, the majority of women, at least, do not tolerate vice in men. But two hundred years ago it was apparently the practice of fathers to instruct their daughters, not only that vice existed, but that they must never protest against it. This infamous doctrine is contained in the *Advice to a Daughter* of the Marquis of Halifax, which was published in 1700.

Halifax was one of the most eminent men of his day. He was wealthy, a peer of the realm, and a statesman of repute. He was as pure in public and private life as it was possible for so important a personage to be. He was certainly not a vicious man according to any standard, and the year after he published the *Advice to a Daughter* Catherine Trotter dedicated her *Unhappy Penitent* to him, "not as the sovereign judge of perfection, but as the patron and encourager of all who aspire to it." The *Advice* itself is justly celebrated for the sound wisdom which most of its pages contain. But in the first section are expressed instructions of such a brutal and degrading character that it is difficult to understand how they could proceed from the same

mind as the rest. It is not that a husband is described as the first object of a young lady's thoughts; it is not that she is informed that she must obey her parents' directions in the choice of a partner, even though they are contrary to her own inclinations; it is not that she is reminded that hers is the inferior sex, and that she is therefore bound to submit in all things to her husband's will. In all this Halifax is merely repeating the dictates of law and religion. But he carries the theory of subjection to its logical conclusion, and instructs his daughter to acquiesce in her husband's immorality.

"First then, you are to consider, you live in a time which hath rendered some kind of Frailties so habitual, that they lay claim to large grains of allowance. The world in this is somewhat unequal, and our Sex seemeth to play the Tyrant in distinguishing partially for ourselves, by making that in the utmost degree Criminal in the Woman which in a Man passeth under a much gentler Censure. . . . But if in this it [your sex] lieth under any Disadvantage, you are more than recompens'd, by having the Honour of Families in your keeping. The Consideration so great a Trust must give you, maketh full amends; and this Power the world hath lodged in you, can hardly fail to restrain the Severity of an ill Husband, and to improve the Kindness and Esteem of a good one. This being so, remember, That next to the danger of committing the fault yourself, the greatest is that of seeing it in your Husband. Do not seem to look or hear that way: If he is a Man

of sense he will reclaim himself; the Folly of it, is of itself sufficient to cure him; if he is not so, he will be provok'd, but not reform'd. To expostulate in these Cases, looketh like declaring War, and preparing Reprisals; which to a thinking Husband would be a dangerous Reflection. Besides, it is so coarse a reason which will be assign'd for a Lady's too great warmth upon such an occasion, that Modesty no less than Prudence ought to restrain her; since such an undecent Complaint makes a Wife much more ridiculous, than the Injury that provoketh her to it. . . . Be assur'd, that in these Cases your Discretion and Silence will be the most prevailing Reproof. An affected Ignorance, which is seldom a Vertue, is a great one here: And when your Husband seeth how unwilling you are to be uneasie, there is no stronger Argument to perswade him not to be unjust to you. Besides, it will naturally make him more yielding in other things; And whether it be to cover or redeem his Offence, you may have the good Effects of it while it lasteth, and all that while have the most reasonable Ground that can be, of presuming such a behaviour will at last entirely convert him. There is nothing so glorious for a Wife, as a Victory so gain'd: A man so reclaim'd, is for ever after subjected to her Vertue; and her bearing, for a Time, is more than rewarded by a Triumph that will continue as long as her life."

This is no exhortation to generosity. There is no room in this for magnanimity, or for anything

but spiritual suicide. It is a direction to acquiesce without protest in the habitual practice of vice, until the vicious man desists from it of his own accord. The husband may riot in the arms of prostitutes as much as he pleases, and the wife is not only to live in his house, but is bound to submit herself to his embraces whenever he is weary of illegitimate indulgence.[1] Acquiescence in the wrong will probably redeem the wrong-doer. But if it does not, he will at any rate bribe his wife to leave him alone by presents of jewellery and fine clothes. The recent promotion of Sir John Bigham has shown that those who maintain the double standard of morality are not thereby debarred from the highest honours of the State, and no other single event of recent years has done so much to stimulate femininism in England. But it may be questioned whether any father, of a social position above the very lowest, would to-day venture to give formal advice of this kind to his daughter, or would permit it to be published, even after his death.

By this indifference to vice in men has been encouraged, not only that infidelity in husbands which is still permitted by the law of divorce, but also the evil of prostitution, the most striking proof of the indifference which men as a class have

[1] It should be noted that there is no mention in the *Advice* of venereal disease, or of the miscarriages, abortions, and other injuries which the wife would often suffer. Knowledge of the physical consequences of vice was not attained by women, except in rare instances, until less than fifty years ago.

exhibited towards the miseries of women. Every man who defends or accepts the differential standard of morality, thereby implicitly maintains that in his judgment it is right and proper that a number of women, arbitrarily selected from the poorer classes, should every year be deprived of health, of happiness, and of life, rotted in body and mind at the most hopeful stage of their existence, in order that a certain number of men, of whom he may not be one, may gratify the lowest part of their nature. This is nothing but the direct result of unregulated male egoism. Conscious brutality is not always, probably not generally, its origin. But it arises inevitably from the fact that men have been brought up to regard women as of less importance than themselves, from the opinion that the desires, the feelings, and the liberty of women are not to be recognized when they happen not to coincide with those of men. The difficulty which men experience, in understanding the woman's point of view in this matter, is analogous to that of the landlord in understanding that of his tenant; of the employer in understanding that of his workman; of the slave-proprietor in understanding that of his slaves; or of the foreign conqueror in understanding that of a subject people. No man having the regulation of the lives of others in his power will fail, sooner or later, to abuse them. The case of prostitution, indeed, cannot properly be compared with any of these things, because not even the most horrible slavery can be so degrading as constant enforced

subjection to animal appetite. The prostitute is a human being degraded to the level of a thing. The only possible analogy would be between this systematic destruction of women and the case of a conquest of England by a foreign Power, an appropriation of many, and those the best paid employments, by aliens, a consequent exclusion of men and boys of the native population from all means of earning an honest livelihood, and a reservation of them for unnatural purposes by the aristocracy of the foreign conquerers. Professions of chivalrous regard would be as empty in the one case as in the other.

It is true that the immediate cause of prostitution is, and always has been, economic. It is thus an inheritance from previous generations, rather than the result of the intention of the present. It would be unjust to blame any particular generation of men for its existence, so long as they were honestly attempting to destroy it. No plea is made here for new or harsher punishments, or for anything but a more genuine recognition of the rights of women. The demand for a higher standard of conduct in men is not to be confused with proposals for legislation, or with the estimate of particular faults. It is not a question whether legal penalties should be imposed upon vice, nor is it necessary to disregard the fact that some vice may always exist and be found incapable of suppression. A moral standard takes no account of political expediency, nor of the irreducible minimum of evil which may be accepted

by a scientist, nor does it prevent the exercise of charity in individual cases. It is nothing but the expression of the ultimate good of which society for the time being can form a conception. It may be impossible of attainment by large masses of living men and women. But in proportion as it is high or low, is the degree by which the majority of the race will approach it. Upon education and upon conduct it must always have great influence, and so long as it is pitched at a low level, so long will education and conduct tend to gravitate towards it. It cannot be denied that the demand of men for a worthier standard of conduct in their associates would raise the character of the whole body to a higher plane than it has yet reached. That this insistence has not hitherto been made except by a minority is a fact which cannot be disputed, and it is a fact which deprives the language of chivalry of half its value. It is a poor consideration for others which extends only to slight indulgences, and permits the greatest abuse of all to flourish unchecked.

A continuous record of unavailing struggle with natural passion, and of futile attempts to overcome irresistible natural forces, might inspire a feminine student of history with regret, and even with sympathy. But nothing is more clear than that men, as representing organized society, have never made any serious effort, either by moral rules or by positive legislation, to put an end to prostitution. Until a short time ago the bulk of them actually

encouraged it. It was a common practice of some medical men to recommend immoral living as a means of preserving health. They thus incited men, for the benefit of their own bodies, to ruin the bodies and souls of women. Many other men, themselves honourable in their dealings with women, have deliberately supported prostitution as a means of avoiding the contamination of their own wives and daughters. They have been concerned, not for the honour of women, but for the honour of their own women. To prevent injury in their own households, they have thrust out the less fortunate members of the other sex to starvation, disease, and death, and have accumulated upon their heads not only tortures of this kind, but also scorn and horror, mockery and hate. The conscious efforts of these classes of men have strengthened the indifference of all. The great majority have therefore treated the vicious indulgences of their own sex with leniency, and in the atmosphere of the double standard of morality prostitution has continued to flourish. No action was ever taken by the State, so long as women were ill-educated and powerless, to reclaim prostitutes or to stamp out the trade in prostitution.[1] This has always been the work of

[1] No action, that is, except the punishment of the party whose motives were least under her control, upon whom, accordingly, punishment could have least effect. Up to the year 1885, a child of thirteen might legally "consent" to her own ruin, and the man who seduced her would be guilty of no crime.

women, and it has only been undertaken since women have obtained power to think and act for themselves. From its first insignificant beginnings in the end of the eighteenth century down to the present day, the campaign against prostitution has shared the fortunes of the wider and more comprehensive struggle in which women have won their way towards liberty. The contest is not yet concluded, nor will it ever be concluded until men cease to have power to control the fortunes of women irrespective of their own wishes. So long as women are treated as inferior beings, so long as men exercise their power to exclude women at their will and pleasure from any field of social activity, so long will many men regard them as destined for vicious indulgence. Until all artificial distinctions between the sexes are swept away, large numbers of women will continue to be segregated for this degrading purpose. Not the least powerful of the motives of those who agitate for Woman Suffrage is their conviction that enfranchisement will raise the social value of women and cause men to regard their honour as equal with their own.

What is remarkable in the history of the eighteenth century is not the general acquiescence in vice and prostitution, but the grotesque contrast which it presented to the conventional language of respectable society. The ideal of womanhood, if fashionable preachers and authors are to be believed, was never higher. The reality was never held in less esteem, and indulgence in vice was

proportioned to the general contempt. In the language of the day, where woman was not a vicious and contemptible aggregation of littlenesses, she was a delicate and fragile creature, to be secluded from even the lightest breath of adversity, to be protected from even the thought of wickedness, the divinely appointed regenerator of the world. In this period there came into common use those expressions "the soft sex," "the fair sex," "the gentle sex," which have done so much to identify women with the qualities of timidity and weakness. Such beings as these it was the duty of strong and courageous men to protect and cherish. Meanwhile, the tawdry army of prostitutes tramped its weary round beneath the lamps. When all other occupations were closed to women, this at least remained open. If it had been the direct object of the framers of social conditions to see that the supply for this market was never wanting, the most diabolical ingenuity could hardly have been more successful. Want of employment and inadequate wages drove most of these women to their deadly trade. They were uneducated, so that their untrained and undisciplined instincts made them, when little more than children, the easy prey of the men who attempted to seduce them. If they had been taught at all, it was to believe that the performance of their sexual functions was the only object of their existence, and it mattered little to them whether the master who selected them was legitimate or illegitimate. While

popular divines proclaimed that it was woman's duty to refine the grosser elements of man, and polite writers canted in all the choicest language of chivalry, the forces of evil were allowed to spend themselves unchecked upon the bodies of thousands of unhappy women. If indifference to wrong is deserving of any punishment, a heavy debt must some day be paid by that chivalry of which women have always heard so much—a chivalry which expends itself for the most part in trifling courtesies and attentions, which seldom looks beyond its immediate surroundings and connections, which exalts a figment of the imagination up to heaven, and allows tens of thousands of living, breathing, and suffering creatures to be thrust down to the lowest bottom of hell. It is impossible to survey the history of prostitution in England, from the days when men could devise no better remedy than flogging a whore at the cart's tail, to the days when women began the work of systematic reclamation of unfortunates, without realizing the truth of Mill's statement that "prostitution seems to be the only resource to those, and to those only, who look upon the problem to be solved to be, how to allow the greatest licence to men consistently with retaining a sufficient reserve or nursery of chaste women for wives." The praise which men have bestowed upon chastity in women is only another expression of male egoism. It arises not from any desire for chastity in women as a class, but simply from a desire for chastity in those women in whom they

are personally interested. So long as the injured woman is merely a common prostitute, male society has never offered her anything but abuse and insult.[1]

It is not here suggested that base and unworthy ideals were universal throughout the time with which this chapter deals. Men were not all rotten and corrupt, even in England after the Restoration. Even among the wealthy men were often to be found who treated women with such honour and respect as the best standards of preceding ages allowed. In some ranks of society economic conditions would enforce an equally generous treatment. Wherever there was poverty, or the fear of poverty, save in the abysmal squalor and degradation of the lowest orders, men would see the stronger and better side of the feminine character. Thrift, economy, and a stout heart in adversity are not the qualities of fools, and the women who displayed them must have won the respect of their men folk. The contemptuous treatment of women, which was so marked a feature of English society, was only possible in circles where women were maintained by the exertions of others, and where their consequent degradation produced no immediate injury to their masters and superiors. But those women who fended for themselves, and upon whose exertions a man had con-

[1] It is only in the last generation that any substantial advance has been made. The Contagious Diseases Acts, repealed in 1886, were the natural outcome of the old ideas. For some account of these Acts, see *post*, p. 172.

stantly to rely, must be made of sterner stuff. Among a large part of the population, and especially among the yeomen, tradesmen, and manufacturers, the classes in which women were neither parasites on the one hand nor beasts of burden on the other, they must have merited and borne a higher dignity, as compared with men, than in the sphere of Halifax and Lord Chesterfield. But the number of women who enjoyed real liberty must have been very small. Everywhere the legal and theological ideas must have had weight, and the latter would be most powerful in those very quarters where life was simplest and the economic worth of woman consequently greatest. The men who not only professed to treat women as their equals, but in their hearts recognized them as their equals, must have been very few. Substantial progress, in any case, could only be made in those classes where wealth and leisure gave opportunities for research and speculation, and it was in those very classes that the condition of women was most hopeless. Bad men regarded them as the object of gallantry. Good men secluded them from public affairs, emphasized the sexual side of their character, invested their virtues with a cloud of dangerous sentimentality, deprived them of real education, treated them, in short, as anything but human beings entitled to equal consideration with themselves. So far as masculine opinion was expressed at all, it laid stress upon the inferiority of the feminine half of the race.

The second consequence of this psychological condition, hardly less deadly to women than the prevalent bi-moralism, was the neglect of their education. Upon this, indeed, depended everything else. So long as women were incapable of thought they must remain in subjection. The whole history of the progress of women during the next hundred years is therefore intimately concerned with the training of their minds. The emancipation of women is to-day expressed in many ways. Throughout the eighteenth century it was almost entirely confined to the gradual recognition by women and afterwards by men, that women had minds as well as bodies. It was not to be expected that men who thought little of the character of women should think highly of their mental capacity, or should pay much attention to its development. Even at the present day, women of the middle and upper classes often receive an education greatly inferior to that of their men relations. But in the first half of the eighteenth century large numbers of women, even of the wealthy classes, had no education at all. Those who received any training received, as a rule, training in nothing but the superficial accomplishments. Why should a girl who was to be married at sixteen or seventeen years of age be educated for any purpose but that of attracting men? Thus it was no uncommon thing to find a lady of birth and fortune who could do little more than sign her own name, and some of the most conspicuous women of society were as in-

capable of writing a letter as they were of leading an army into battle.[1] The great majority had neither learning nor wisdom. The basis of their training was sexual, and its object was to develop in them those qualities which would excite desire in the opposite sex.[2] They were able to hold their own in the commonplace conversation of mixed company, though it was often remarked that men could not stand a prolonged ordeal of this kind. They were skilled in all the science of the management of the fan, and well equipped to endure the laborious frivolities of the assembly and the card-room. They could finger the spinet or the harpsichord, and knew how to sing ballads with propriety. If unusually well trained they could make pastry, cast accounts, and manage the various concerns of a household; and a lady was held in high repute

[1] For some references to the education of the period see Ashton's *London in the Reign of Queen Anne*, pp. 22, 24; *Nature's Pictures*, by the Duchess of Newcastle (1667); Defoe's *Essay on Projects* (1697); *The Guardian*, No. 155, by Addison (1713); Swift's letter to Mrs. Delaney, 29th January, 1755, in the *Correspondence of Mary Granville*; Fielding's *Covent Garden Journal*, 25th July, 1752; Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker* (Bramble to Lewis, 17th April). For types of unusually good education, see Evelyn's description of his daughter in his *Diary* 10th March, 1685; Ballard's *Learned Ladies* (1752), and the *Female Worthies* (1766). So late as 1755 an intelligent foreign traveller said of English women, "They are infinitely less pleasing in conversation than the ladies of Italy or France" (See Angeloni's *Letters on the English Nation* (1755), I, 222).

[2] This subject is treated in more detail in chapter iii. of this work.

if she could cover a suite of furniture with the work of her needle.[1] But the virtues which were important were superficial. The perfect woman must have at once an attractive exterior and an infinite capacity for self-suppression. Reading and reflection, no less than vigorous action in the world, were regarded as the peculiar privileges of men. If a woman had acquired, in the solitude of her father's library, anything more than a veneer of learning, she was instructed to conceal it. If she displayed her knowledge in conversation she would probably be treated with derision by all her associates; and if any of them treated her with anything but contumely, it was with the open-mouthed astonishment with which a bumpkin regarded a learned pig at a fair.[2]

In commonplace natures this careful repression of all the intellectual faculties would produce no apparent disaster. Natural capacity would enable many women, with experience, to manage with some success a house and family. But nothing could have been devised which would be more fatal to genius on the one hand or weakness of mind on the other. If emotions are the source of all great work in life they must be controlled and disciplined by the intellect. Women of strong feelings, under the system which prevailed in the

[1] *The Guardian*, No. 158 (Addison).

[2] *Letters of Lady Mary Montagu*, I, 150; III, 41, 28, 45, 52; *Letters of Sir Thomas Fitzosborn*, 28 May, 1748; Evelyn's *Diary*, Mrs. Evelyn to Dr. Bohun, 4 Jan., 1671; Fénelon, *Education des Filles* (1688), chap. x.

early eighteenth century, were almost inevitably extravagant in thought and conduct. Ordinary girls, after a few years of questioning and demur, would no doubt succumb and settle down to the dull routine of household drudgery. Women of great capacity, like Mary Wortley Montagu, would feel themselves hampered at every turn, become reckless and irresponsible, and die with three-fourths of their powers wasted. Women of a meaner sort developed into the typical women of the day. Their emotions ran riot; they had no sense of discipline; they squandered money on dress, on strange china, on entertainments, on cards, on every form of dissipation. After the fire of youth had departed, every vice which want of education permits to flourish grew rank and luxuriant. The spirit of inquiry degenerated into a vulgar and impertinent curiosity. Unusual capacity for the communication of ideas became empty and frivolous gossip. Thwarted energy was distorted into a peevish and querulous discontent. Generous emotions which, fixed upon big things, might have doubled the strength of the forces of improvement, were concentrated upon petty things, and dwindled into trifling and irresponsible whims and humours.

Contemporary literature deals with but three types of women. The woman of dignity and understanding never appears except in the character of a middle-aged mother of a family. The heroines show a striking uniformity of littleness. At best they were witty, as a rule they were merely chaste

and submissive. Their most conspicuous virtue was their fidelity. But this was not the fidelity of great and generous natures, it was the fidelity of slaves, full of tears and humiliation. Fidelity in a woman meant little more than an inexhaustible capacity for condoning infidelity in a man. The precepts of the Marquis of Halifax were observed with exactness. Sophia marries Tom Jones, whom she knows to have engaged in persistent debauchery. Amelia flings herself upon the neck of the paltry scoundrel Booth, as he turns from the arms of his paramour. Emilia surrenders without any show of reluctance to Peregrine Pickle, who has attempted her honour in a bagnio. Even Richardson, who passed for a moralist, lets his Pamela, full of gratitude for his condescension, give herself to a man who has made persistent attempts to seduce her. With these anæmic heroines are contrasted the jealous and lustful "old maids" and the ridiculous and pedantic "learned ladies." The idea of woman thus expressed is purely sexual. Scorn is poured upon those who fail to marry.[1] No effort is made to describe in the central characters the permanent and enduring qualities of the mind, and those of their associates who possess some learning are invariably treated so as to bring their learning into contempt.[2] Even the marriage which was

[1] For an example of the "old maid" of fiction, see Smollett's *Roderick Random*, chap. lx.

[2] See, for instance, the dispute between Dr. Harrison and Mrs. Bennet in Fielding's *Amelia*, Book X. chap. i.

the justification of the heroine was seldom a very noble business. Smollett's conception of it was purely sensual. Fielding had a glimpse of finer things, but Sophia and Amelia, gentle and lovable creatures as they are, take all their opinions from their husbands, and have nothing of the good sense and self-reliance which would enable them to act in an independent situation. Richardson analysed the feminine character as neither Smollett nor Fielding could, but he analysed it always in a state of dependence and in its relations with the masculine. Throughout the eighteenth century no man looked upon life from the woman's point of view.

The prevailing idea of woman, as expressed in the law, in the precepts of the Church, and in current literature, was that she was an inferior creature, made for the bearing of children and the gratification of men, incapable of exercising any faculties than those which were not required for those two purposes, and thus not only to be excluded from all occupations requiring knowledge, reason, and foresight, but even to be deprived of the mental training which would strengthen and develop those faculties if she possessed them. Historical judgments must always be relative, and it argues no great brutality on the part of the man of this time that the state of women was so poor. But judged by the ideal standard to which things move it was mean and humiliating. Woman existed for no purpose but association with man. Her education was directed solely to that object; every road to inde-

pendence was closed ; in matrimony itself she was deliberately placed in a subordinate station ; everything tended to the enervation of her understanding and character, and professions of chivalry only partly veiled the foulest degradations to which male selfishness subjected her. In the general picture there were some brighter spaces, and it is possible to detect a slow improvement, even before the crisis of the French Revolution. But the aspect is for the most part one of unrelieved gloom. Out of this slough of intellectual and moral degradation English women have been struggling for the past two centuries, and it is only in the last fifty years that they have made any great advance in the direction of freedom.

CHAPTER II

THE BEGINNING OF REFORM

THE early eighteenth century was not a favourable time for preachers of new gospels. The period of strenuous politics was at an end, that of earnest speculation had not yet begun. In those circles in which alone new thoughts could make any headway, forms were of more account than ideas, and manners a more profitable possession than character. Among the wealthy classes absolute standards dominated almost the whole of life, and insincerity, under the influence of men like Chesterfield, became almost the chief of virtues. In the best of society, thought worked with a desperate slowness. There was little opportunity for communication of thought of any kind. There were not half a dozen public libraries in the country, and the circulating library did not exist. The newspapers contained mere scraps of information, and news letters and private correspondence were for the majority of readers the ordinary sources of knowledge of affairs outside their own parish. In a society where there was neither railway, nor telegraph, nor telephone, and where a journey from

Manchester to London was a more formidable task than a journey from Manchester to Vladivostok at the present day, new ideas of any kind spread with the utmost difficulty. Slowest of all would be the progress of a nobler conception of women. Most men would be doubly impervious to ideas which sapped their own privileges, and compelled them to treat with generosity those whom economic necessity, confirmed by law, religion, and custom, had placed entirely in their power. Most women, on the other hand, would be incapable of serious thought, and so far as they thought at all would reproduce only those ideas which had been carefully instilled into them from their infancy, the first and foremost of which was the idea of the permanent and inevitable subordination of their own sex.

Here and there, however, both men and women showed some consciousness of the unfitness of things.[1] The recollection of the strong women of the last century had not been entirely destroyed by the catastrophe of the Restoration, and it was impossible for any man of imagination or insight to accept the degenerate creatures of his day as the final expression of womanhood. Some women also had escaped contamination. Either from natural inclination or by the rare generosity of

[1] See, for example, Swift's *Letter to a New-married Lady*; Fitzmaurice's *Life of Sir William Petty* (1825), 277; *Wiltshire, Topographical Collections of John Aubrey* (1670), preface; Watson's *Reflections on Antient and Modern Learning*, cited by Mary Astell in her *Serious Proposal to Ladies* (1697).

a parent, they were able to catch a glimpse of things beyond the narrow bounds of the nursery and the kitchen. It was impossible to destroy the natural thirst for knowledge, even in a woman, and discontent soon made its appearance. The first complaints were directed against the prevailing system of education. Most of the new thinkers among women were content with personal liberty. Some, like Mary Wortley Montagu, were bolder, and incurred social ostracism for giving proofs of intellectual power. The most courageous of all was Mary Astell, who published more than one book upon the disabilities of her sex. Her proposal for the foundation of a Ladies' College anticipated by nearly two hundred years the establishment of Newnham and Girton. It was discouraged by Bishop Burnet on the ground that it savoured of monasticism, and its execution was never seriously undertaken. Harriet Harcourt, indeed, set up a private institution in Yorkshire, where she and a small companionship of women divided their time between religion and letters.[1] But there was little effort on the part of women to undertake the higher education of their sex. What was in fact needed was not so much the education of women as the education of men. Not until the masters

[1] Mary Astell's *Serious Proposal to Ladies* (1697); Ballard's *Learned Ladies* (1752), and *The Female Worthies* (1766); articles, "Mary Astell" and "Harriet Eusebia Harcourt." There are obscene allusions to Mary Astell's "Academy" in the *Tatler*, Nos. 32 and 63. The author was almost certainly Swift.

of society had changed their ideas of women could there be any alteration in the ideas which women had of themselves. For nine hundred and ninety-nine women out of a thousand, the opinion of a despotic father or husband would count for more than a host of pamphlets written by a stranger, even by a stranger of their own sex. It was fortunately not long before men of sense and understanding devoted themselves to the same work as Mary Astell. It was indeed impossible for such men to be satisfied with the prevailing condition of the feminine mind, and the masculine literature of the subject steadily increased in volume as the century advanced. Of these men writers the earliest was Daniel Defoe.

Defoe had written on the education of women in his *Essay on Projects* in the year 1692, and in 1697 he was encouraged by Mary Astell's example to publish his views. He is frank, outspoken, and vigorous. He makes no suggestion that women are inferior beings. He denounces with honest zeal those who at once deprive women of education and despise them for being foolish. "I have often thought of it as one of the most barbarous customs in the world, considering us as a civilized and a Christian country. We reproach the sex every day with folly and impertinence; while I am confident had they the advantages of education equal to us, they would be guilty of less than ourselves." It is true that Defoe aims at no lofty ideal. He makes no demand for the abolition of all artificial distinc-

tions between the sexes. He does not suggest that women should take part in politics, that they should be admitted to the learned professions, or even that they should be allowed to attend lectures at the Universities. However he may protest to the contrary, there lurks always in his mind a feeling that women are only important in their relations to himself. "To such whose genius would lead them to it, I would deny no sort of learning, but the chief thing in general is to cultivate the understandings of the sex, that they may be capable of all sorts of conversation; that their parts and judgments being improved, they may be as profitable in their conversation as they are pleasant." The aim of female education, in short, should be not the development of women, but the gratification of men. This is only a subtle expression of male egoism. But Defoe goes unconsciously very near to the root of the whole matter when he declares: "That all the world are mistaken in their practice about women. For I cannot think that God Almighty ever made them so delicate, so glorious creatures, and furnished them with such charms, so agreeable and so delightful to mankind; with souls capable of the same accomplishments with men; and all to be only stewards of our Houses, Cooks, and Slaves.

"Not that I am for exalting the female government in the least, but, in short, I WOULD HAVE MEN TAKE WOMEN FOR COMPANIONS, AND EDUCATE THEM TO BE FIT FOR IT."

There, after all, is the gist of the thing. When women are reckoned as the friends and companions of men, the last of their disabilities will fall from them. The history of the emancipation of women is nothing but the history of their advance from sex subordination to friendship.

The attempts of Mary Astell and Defoe produced little result. But the refinement of manners, which began with Jeremy Collier's attack on the Stage in 1698, was naturally accompanied by a greater consideration for women, and a marked improvement was effected in the reign of Queen Anne under the influence of Addison and Steele. It was impossible for those amiable censors to overlook the follies of the fashionable women of their day, and the pages of the *Tatler*, the *Guardian*, and the *Spectator* are full of references to both the internal and the external frivolities of feminine society. These essayists were eminent representatives of a class which had mastered the art of doing trifles with dignity. They accordingly penetrated but little beneath the surface of things. As their style was delicate, so their ideas were not robust. But they had a wider audience than either Defoe or Mary Astell, and they left a permanent impression upon the education of the women of the upper classes.

They were quite outspoken in their comparison of the women whom they now encountered with those whom they had known in their youth. "Certain it is that the taste of grace and beauty is much lowered. . . . The things you follow, and

make songs on now, should be sent to knit. or sit down to bobbins or bone lace. They are indeed neat, and so are their sempstresses; they are pretty, and so are their handmaids."[1] But their contempt, unlike that of Pope and Chesterfield, was directed less towards the offenders than towards the system which produced them. They ascribed all the follies of the female sex to want of education. "The fair sex are as capable as men of the liberal sciences."[2] "The general mistake among us in the educating our children is, that in our daughters we take care of their persons and neglect their minds."[3] They perceived the close connection which exists between reason and morality, and they pointed out that intellectual idleness is the parent of vice.[4] They declared that it was impossible for society to be happily constituted while one half of it was kept in a state of ignorance—"the great happiness of mankind depends upon the manner of educating and treating that sex."[5] They exposed the folly of expecting that marriage would be a blessed state when one of the parties to it was nearly always a fool. Wisdom alone could stand the test of time, and "the rule for pleasing long is, to obtain such qualifications as would make them so, were they not women." That, indeed, was the root of the matter. The education of women was purely sexual.[6] They were taught nothing but

[1] Steele, *Tatler*, No. 61. [2] Steele, *Guardian*, No. 172.
[3] Steele, *Spectator*, No. 66. [4] Steele, *Tatler*, No. 248.
[5] Steele, *Tatler*, No. 141. [6] Steele, *Spectator*, No. 66.

how to acquire husbands. Until it was recognized that the true end of education, for women as for men, ought to be the development of the individual as a human being, and not as a woman or as a man, there was no hope of producing a good feminine character. There were differences between the sexes. But even those very differences would be turned to the most profitable use if it were not made the object of education to exaggerate them. The basis of character was wisdom and virtue, and wisdom and virtue were of no sex. "We ought to consider in this particular not what is the sex, but what is the species to which they belong." "Their amusements seem contrived for them rather as they are women than as they are reasonable creatures, and are more adapted to the sex than to the species."[1]

Contrasted with the opinions of most of their contemporaries, those of Steele and Addison seem bold enough. But though their ideal was high, their practical knowledge of the business of education was small. They laid too much emphasis upon learning as a diversion, as a mere means of occupying time or enlivening conversation. They

[1] Addison, *Guardian*, No. 155. Swift, who, with all his ferocity, was not a bad friend of women, used almost the same language as Mary Wollstonecraft when he declared, "I am ignorant of any one quality that is amiable in a man, which is not equally so in a woman; I do not except even modesty and gentleness of nature" (See his *Letter to a New-Married Lady*, and compare his *Hints to an Essay on Conversation*).

do not seem to have realized the immense value of a definite task in life, of systematic application of mental effort, of a large opportunity for the exercise of the developed mind. They left the dependence of woman upon a father or a husband her proper condition, and they asserted no claim on her behalf to vigorous intellectual employments in active life. Through all their work runs a vein of sentimentality which in their imitators was exaggerated into a positive vice. The essays abound in references to "the fair sex," "the soft sex," and "the gentle sex," and even when they urge the necessity of strengthening the feminine character they employ expressions which represent nothing but weakness. Here is a typical passage :—

"It is, methinks, a low and degrading idea of that sex, which was created to refine the joy and soften the cares of humanity by the most agreeable participation, to consider them merely as objects of sight. . . . How much nobler is the contemplation of beauty heightened by virtue, and commanding our esteem and love while it draws our observation? How faint and spiritless are the charms of a coquet when compared with the real loveliness of Sophronia's innocence, piety, good humour, and truth, virtues which add a new softness to her sex, and even beautify her beauty! That agreeableness, which must otherwise have appeared no longer in the modest virgin, is now preserved in the tender mother, the prudent friend, and the faithful wife."[1]

[1] John Hughes, in the *Spectator*, No. 33.

It is difficult to point out a single phrase which is not substantially accurate. But the whole thing is perilously near the abyss of mawkishness into which most of the writers of the next hundred years tumbled headlong.[1]

It was inevitable that this sort of teaching, though it might and did remove many external vices and raise the standard of feminine taste, should do little to make the characters of women robust. Its noblest result was a "blue-stocking." It might produce an Elizabeth Montague, but a harder school was required to train a Mary Wollstonecraft. With this limitation, the essayists of the early eighteenth century rendered considerable service to the emancipation of women. Their best work in this field was probably unconscious. It was where they applied pressure least directly that the pressure was most felt. Their system of education was deficient. But their works lay upon every lady's dressing-table, and were used as text-books in girls' schools; and the regular perusal of sound thoughts, expressed in admirably precise and accurate language,

[1] See, for an early example, the journal *Common Sense*, for September, 1739, where a contributor, after explaining that man's province is universal and that "women are not formed for great cares, but to soothe and soften ours," goes on to say: "Should some lady of spirit, unjustly offended at these restrictions, ask what province I leave to their sex, I answer that I leave to them whatever has not been peculiarly assigned to ours. I leave them a mighty empire, Love." Upon which the only possible comment is Mr. Burchell's "Fudge!" The first English foundling hospital was established in 1739.

cannot have failed to stimulate sound thinking, precision, and accuracy in feminine as well as in masculine minds.

While most women remained in a state of profound ignorance, and a small number improved their taste by perusing the *Tatler*, the *Spectator*, and the *Guardian*, a few were already aiming at higher things. In 1739 appeared a most remarkable pamphlet entitled *Woman not Inferior to Man*, by "Sophia, a Person of Quality." The author's identity is unknown. It is supposed that she was Lady Mary Wortley Montagu; and it is difficult to suggest any other woman who could have written it.[1] Whoever "Sophia" may have been, she stood in a different class not only from the conventional woman, but even from the "learned lady." It is perhaps worth observing here that, like all the prominent advocates of the freedom of women, she admits the exalted character of motherhood —"There is no employment in a commonwealth which deserves more honour, or greater thanks and rewards. Nay, I know not whether it may not appear to render women deserving the first place in civil society."[2] But while making no complaint against the laborious duties which nature imposes upon her sex, she goes further than even

[1] Elizabeth Montague was writing very sagely about the position of women at this time See her *Letters*, (1809), I, 88; II, 155; "As for the intrinsic value of a woman, few know it, and nobody cares." But "Sophia" was a much more vigorous character than Mrs. Montague.

[2] Chap. ii.

many modern women in demanding economic independence. Not content with requiring a liberal education, she asks for admission to every employment in the State, and claims that there is no reason why women should not become even generals and admirals.[1] Without necessarily proceeding with her to this extreme, we may at least agree with her argument that women should be permitted, if they will, to become professors, lawyers, doctors of medicine, clergy, and members of the legislature. There is at least one country in the world where women may be seen performing each of these functions, and even in England we have at last overcome our repugnance to the woman doctor.

The whole pamphlet is a fine and vigorous protest against restricting women to the performance of their sexual functions, and, as was natural, the bulk of it is devoted to an attack upon the prevailing system of education, the rank soil in which all the other disabilities flourished. It was unjust to contend that because certain women were ridiculous and pedantic no women should receive a learned education. "For true knowledge and solid learning must, cannot but, make women as well as men both more humble and more virtuous. It must be owned if a little superfine knowledge has rendered some of our sex vain, it has equally rendered some of them insupportable." She riddles

[1] Chaps. vi., vii.

the circular argument by which men deprive women of the education which would fit them for important affairs, and then exclude them from important affairs because they are not well educated. "Why is learning useless to us? Because we have no share in public offices? And why have we no share in public offices? Because we have no learning." No better statement could be obtained of the attitude of the average man to the woman's movement. It is the very nature and habit of conservatism to exaggerate disabilities. Facts are bad enough. But upon facts the conservative will always base ideals. Instead of inquiring into the why and the wherefore of an existing institution, he assumes that it is not only existent, but right, and defends with every available weapon a position which he would never have taken up if he had first surveyed the ground. Men have for generations pursued this course with women. They found them in the eighteenth century weak in mind and body, and they exalted weakness into an ideal. What was the result of the brutality or the stupidity of their ancestors, they confirmed by the exercise of reason. Finding an existing grievance they exaggerated it into a permanent disability. It is the peculiar merit of Sophia that she detected and emphasized the connection between the object of education and the system which is pursued. So long as the sphere of woman was limited, so long her education would be narrow. So long as the ideal of womanhood was feeble, so long her training

would produce weakness. So long as she was secluded, she would develop only the qualities of seclusion. Women capable of the big things of life would never be bred in England, so long as the women knew that whatever their merit and capacity might be the big things of life would be kept beyond their reach.[1]

This pamphlet, in spite of all its merits, made little impression upon society. If there was one feature of the eighteenth century more marked than its boldness of abstract thinking, it was its timidity in making changes in daily life. The ears of those women who were in a position to read *Woman not Inferior to Man* were closed to its preaching as resolutely as those of the ladies of fifty years later were closed to the doctrine of the *Rights of Woman.* These "blue-stockings," however, who began to appear in society about the middle of the century, played some part in the emancipation of women. They found learning despised in their own sex, and they left it, if not universally honoured, at any rate tolerated by a considerable number of men of standing.[2] They asserted the right of a woman to acquire as much knowledge as she pleased, and to display it as

[1] "Sophia's" pamphlet provoked a scurrilous reply entitled, *Man Superior to Woman.* Both were reprinted, with a rejoinder by her under the title of *Beauty's Triumph,* and published in 1751.

[2] The letters of Horace Walpole show the gradual change in masculine opinion. The contrast between his attitude towards Mary Wortley Montagu and Lady Pomfret and

she pleased, and they succeeded in great measure because they did not push their claims to excess. They made no rash demands for equality of opportunity; they did not try to thrust themselves into public employments; they hardly competed seriously in the production of literature. The extent of their activity was to develop to perfection the use of literary acquirements as a diversion. In Mrs. Montagu's palace in Portman Square, or Mrs. Vesey's more modest house in Clarges Street, Mrs. Thrale, Fanny Burney, Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Chapone, Mrs. Delany, and Harnah More encountered such members of the opposite sex as would tolerate wisdom upon the lips of a woman. Some of them attained to very high distinction. Mrs. Carter was recognized as a sound classical scholar; Fanny Burney's novels began a new era in the history of English fiction; and during the period of revolution which closed the century Hannah More's books and pamphlets in defence of things established were distributed in hundreds of thousands. But with this solitary exception of Hannah More, who in more than one respect was of the nineteenth century rather than the eighteenth, the "blue-stockings" interfered but little in the affairs of the outside world. There is extant a characteristic letter of Mrs. Delany. Writing to Bernard Granville on the 11th February,

his attitude towards Mrs. Damer and Hannah More is most marked. Of Elizabeth Montague he always wrote contemptuously, perhaps through jealousy.

1775, she said: "The world is in a bustle about the American affairs, but I am no politician, and don't enter into these matters. Women lose all their dignity when they meddle with subjects that don't belong to them: their own sphere affords them *opportunities enough* to show their *real consequence. A pretending* woman, and a *trifling, ignorant* man, are *equally* despicable; and after all the endeavours to make what is generally called 'a figure in life,' what does it all avail when we come to our bed of sickness, and consider mortality?" The reflection on one of the most momentous happenings of modern times was very natural in a woman of independent means. But it is very far removed from the realities of existence. Everything about the "blue-stockings" was of this mild and contented description. Their energies, so far as they extended beyond the limits of conversation, were directed to nothing more substantial than the translation of Epictetus, plain needlework, fine embroidery, ingenious manipulation of feathers and paper into household ornaments, and other developments of the "accomplishments" of the previous generation. Mrs. Carter and Hannah More took some part in the organization of charity which linked the eighteenth century, the age of speculation, with the nineteenth, the era of reform. But this was not the work of "blue-stockings" as such. It represented the growth of a new social consciousness, and it came, not from the thin air of aris-

tocracy, but from the murk and turmoil of the depths.

As a class, these women worked no great revolution in the condition of their sex. The atmosphere in which they moved was always that of comfort and security. If they were not themselves wealthy, they associated almost entirely with those who were. Their virtues were therefore of a rather delicate kind, such as may be safely practised upon incomes of five thousand a year, the consummation of an infinite leisure ; accurate, if not profound thinking ; logical, if not robust discussion ; well-chosen, if not vigorous language. They savour, indeed, somewhat of the schoolroom. There is too much consciousness of development, too much gratification at their own superiority, too much deference to prevailing ideas of what is proper, too much formality even in the arrangement of the drawing-rooms in which they sat and talked. Fanny Burney never loses the appearance of a precocious scholar at the academy for young ladies, and if Hannah More fails to look like a schoolgirl, it is only because she assumes the more formidable aspect of a governess. These women varied widely in character. But so far as they were "learned ladies," they wanted strength and courage. They were capable within the bounds of convention, but those bounds they never dared to transgress. They paid too much deference to propriety. They worshipped perpetually at the shrine of respectability, and, like all respectable people, forfeited no little of the good

opinion of posterity, in order to retain that of their contemporaries.[1]

The blue-stockings represented the highest product of the school of Steele and Addison. The dozen ladies of good social standing who formed their company found imitators in various parts of the country. Some of these, like Anna Seward, concealed their good sense under a ridiculous pedantry.[2] Others, like Mrs. Barbauld, contented themselves with a less pretentious style. Many not only talked, but wrote. The last half of the century saw a steady increase in the publication of books written by women. Fanny Burney was followed by Mrs. Ratcliffe, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen. Mrs. Macaulay wrote a history which enjoyed a considerable reputation in its day, the day of Gibbon, Hume, and Robertson. Joanna Baillie wrote plays, Anna Seward and Mrs. Barbauld both prose and verse, and Hannah More attempted every kind of literature, from the drama down to

[1] The best study of the blue-stockings is Miss Ethel Rolt Wheeler's *Famous Blue-Stockings* (1910). There are abundant references to them in contemporary correspondence and diaries: especially those of Mrs. Delany, Madame D'Arblay, Horace Walpole, Elizabeth Montague, Mrs. Thrale, and Hannah More.

[2] Anna Seward has been sadly maligned. Her self-consciousness was prodigious, and her epistolary style was Johnsonese gone mad. But she sometimes came much nearer to realities than women like Mrs. Montague and Mrs. Delany. So far as I can discover, she was the only "learned lady" of her time, who saw good in Mary Wollstonecraft.

political tracts. The original " blue-stocking " companionship became extinct,[1] but not before it had established the right of women not only to read books, but to produce them. This encouragement to intellectual activity slowly pervaded society in all ranks.[2] Here and there the generosity of a parent or the unchecked curiosity of a daughter sowed the seeds of a sounder education than was generally to be obtained. But it must not be supposed that a good education was common, or that even the best was not vitiated by the false ideals of womanhood, to which the great majority of girls were expected to conform. Mere acquaintance with books, and even a sound knowledge of the contents of books, are not enough to form a character. Every child will be shaped more or less roughly to the standard which is erected by her teachers. So long as that standard had anything of weakness in it, the majority of girls would grow up weak, however intensely they might be required to study the lives of the strongest men and women of the world.

[1] Madame D'Arblay to Dr. Burney, 13th December, 1800.

[2] There is a curious passage in a letter written by Anna Seward to Mrs. Mompessan on the 14th June, 1791. " I heard some ladies at Burton, who neither have, nor pretend to bookish knowledge, use the following words with prompt spontaneity in conversing on common topics, viz. ' literature, literary, hilarity, stipulate, excruciating, delusive, juvenile, temerity, contemporary, phenomenon, popular, conservatory,' etc. Twenty years ago, scarce one of these words would have been understood, much less used by the generality of private gentlewomen. I like this growing Latinity."

The next chapter of this work will therefore be devoted to an examination of some of the books which deal with the education of girls during the last half of the eighteenth century. From this it will appear how unreasonable it would have been to expect at this time any great improvement in the character of English women.

CHAPTER III

THE EDUCATION OF SENTIMENT

THE rise of the " blue-stockings " was only one phase of the intellectual activity which began about the middle of the eighteenth century, and interest in the condition of women was also indicated by a steady increase in the number of books written on the subject of their education. These works are of importance, not only for the information which they give about feminine studies, but also for the light which they throw upon the feminine character of the time, and the ideal which every well-bred woman was expected to attain. The best that can be said of that ideal is that it was better than the ideal of the preceding fifty years. Tried by any absolute standard it seems poor enough. Throughout the period under review, from the beginning of the religious and political revival to the outbreak of the French Revolution, there prevailed in England a strong reaction against French manners. The evangelical tendencies which made their appearance about this time naturally strengthened the old Puritan ideals of woman and her sphere, and they were further

confirmed by the vicious excesses of the decaying order in France. One of the most striking features of French society was the freedom enjoyed by women, and it could not be denied this freedom was often freedom from self-restraint as well as from social restraint. The English mind, which ever confused morality with orthodoxy, revolted alike from French speculation and French licentiousness, and the desire to preserve feminine chastity led directly to attempts to strengthen the fetters which already hampered the feminine mind. The revival had, in fact, the characteristics of the class in which it had its origin. It was more of the middle class than of the aristocracy. The best that could be said of the English middle class of that time was that it meant well. It seldom thought well. With all its virtues, it had little imagination, little sympathy, little power of understanding what was outside the immediate scope of its ordinary occupations. It never consciously oppressed its women. But it could not conceive the real nature of their grievances, the complete repression of bodily and mental energy, the want of space for the exercise of both, the persistent subordination of the needs and interests of women to those of men. It was not until the impurity had been burnt out of the flame of France that the spirit of reform was really kindled in England.[1]

[1] I shall quote in this chapter from the following works: —Alexander's *History of Women* (1769): Lord Kames' *Loose Hints upon Education* (2nd edition, 1782); Dr.

The books under review show how conservative was the prevailing estimate of women. The ideal character was still entirely sexual. It is almost impossible to find a single passage in which it is suggested that a woman can be honestly or worthily occupied except in relation to a husband and children. It was admitted, indeed, that some women would probably remain unmarried. But their condition was regarded, as a rule, as that of persons who had failed in life, and the utmost that education could provide for them was some means of innocent diversion during their idle hours.[1] The whole object of a woman's life was still assumed to be the performance of sexual duties, and to

Gregory's *Legacy to his Daughters* (1784); J. [illegible] *Strictures on Female Education* (1788); Dr. Er[illegible] win's *Female Education in Boarding Schools* (17[illegible]eli[illegible] More's *Essays for Young Ladies* (1789), and [illegible] *on Female Education* (1799); the egregious J[illegible]igi[illegible] paper on female education in his *Collected Pieces* (1808); Mrs. Barbauld's essay in her *Legacy to Young Ladies* (1826), and the *Memoir of Mrs. Barbauld* by Lucy Aikin (1825). One or two of the concluding letters in Richardson's *Pamela*, and his correspondence with Lady Bradshaigh, Dr. Delany, Miss Highmore, and Thomas Edwards (1749–54) throw considerable light on the ideals of the reformers of the next fifty years. I have also consulted the other works mentioned in the Appendix to this volume. It is only in the *Essays* of Vicesimus Knox and the works of Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton that we find traces of a good pyschology.

[1] William Hayley published a treatise on *Old Maids* in 1792. It is full of classical and scriptural quotations in praise of virginity, and is obviously intended to alleviate the unhappy lot of unmarried women. But it offers no alternative to marriage.

that all her other powers and capacities were subordinated. "Women," says one writer, "are considered not so much as the partners of our toil and labour, as the sweetners of our pleasures and enjoyments."[1] "The profession of ladies," says another, "to which the bent of their instruction should be turned, is that of daughters, wives, mothers, and mistresses of families.[2] "Men," says a third, "have various departments in active life; women have but one, and all women have the same, differently modified indeed by their rank in life and other incidental circumstances. It is, to be a wife, a mother, a mistress of a family."[3] That the care of her children, when she has children of a tender age, is the most important duty of a woman will not be denied by any man or woman with a sense of social responsibility. But the habit of regarding marriage as the sole object of a girl's training, and married life as her only sphere of activity, produced disastrous effects upon theories of education. Specialized education is always bad, unless it is accompanied by general education. When the object of the special education was the production of a dependent being, who was required to do nothing but look after children, the qualities of independence, of energy, of promptness, which can only be developed by general training and experience, were seldom if ever to be found in the adult woman. Some of the works

[1] Alexander, I, 59.
[2] More, *Strictures*, I, 106; *Essays*, 134.
[3] Barbauld. See also Goldsmith's *Letters from a Citizen of the World*, Letter 19.

which are reviewed in this chapter contain bold statements of the equal capacity of women with that of men, and of the disastrous effects which their want of education had produced.[1] But for the most part they frankly admit the inferior capacity of women, or at least that inferior intellectual training will suffice.

The virtue upon which they all lay most stress is that of "delicacy," a word which occurs in these books with nauseous frequency. The ostentatious simplicity of the Court of George III, and a characteristically English reaction against the free thinking and free living which prevailed in France, furnished an excuse for an outburst of mawkishness and sentimentality. "Propriety," said Mrs. Hannah More, "is to a woman what the great Roman citizen says action is to an orator; it is the first, the second, the third requisite."[2] This delicacy or propriety implied not only modesty, but ignorance, and not only true decency of conduct, but false decency of mind. Nothing was to be thoroughly known, nothing to be frankly expressed. The vicious concealment was not confined to physical facts, but pervaded all forms of knowledge. Not only must the girl be kept ignorant of the principles

[1] See, for instance, Alexander, II, 42; Richardson, *passim*; *Female Worthies* (1766), Introduction. "Souls are of no sex," says the anonymous author of this last, "any more than wit, genius, or any other of the intellectual faculties." See also the *Essays* of Vicesimus Knox, No. 142.

[2] *Strictures*, I, 6; Gregory.

of physiology, but she must also abstain from penetrating thoroughly into the mysteries of history, of politics, of science, and of philosophy. Even her peculiar province of religion must be lightly surveyed.[1] She was not required to think for herself, therefore she was deprived of all the training which would enable her to think at all. The girl must appear to be dependent upon the mental strength of a man, as well as upon his physical strength. If, in her desire to occupy her spare time with study, she acquired some accurate knowledge, she must be careful never to display it, and she was constantly reminded that to neglect this injunction would imperil her chances in the matrimonial market. "Be cautious," said Dr. Gregory, "in displaying your good sense. It will be thought you assume a superiority over the rest of the company. But if you happen to have any learning keep it a profound secret, especially from the men, who generally look with a jealous and malignant eye on a woman of great parts and a cultivated understanding."[2] "Is it then desirable," asked Mr. Bowdler, "that women should sacrifice their present grace of mind and richness of imagination in order to become forcible and accurate reasoners? . . . Can we, without a sort of revulsion in our feelings, consider

[1] More, I, 171; Gregory.

[2] Gregory. Compare Mrs. Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, Section "Accomplishments"; and Huth's *Life of T. H. Buckle*, II, 40; Capel Loffte to Henry Crabbe Robinson, *Diary of Henry Crabbe Robinson*, I, 135.

a timid, gentle, affectionate creature, disentangling all the mazes of metaphysics, floundering in the Serbonian bog of politics, lost in infinitesimals, or deep in dust and lore amidst the ambiguities of history and languages? . . . We must not hope that the scholar will ever condescend to that careless prattle, which now delights our faculties, and relieves the weariness of this work-day world. Will not the metaphysician weigh her ideas, and measure her words? . . . In truth, civilization is a sad leveller. It destroys the most striking objects in the natural world, and all originality of character and energy of the passions in the moral. Something, however, it has still left us—the vale, the babbling stream, the sunny meadow, with the smiles and simple vivacity of woman, sweeter than all the inanimate world can give. Why should we deprive ourselves also of these pleasures? Why should we force nature to our own unhappiness?" So the *Sermons* of Dr. Fordyce, one of the most popular works of the period, are stuffed with such expressions as "smiling innocents," "beauteous innocents," "the fairest images of heaven here below," "the British fair," and "the fairest of the fair." In such nauseous compounds of the language of gallantry and the language of religion did men describe the ideal woman.

What is most significant, is that these disastrous theories about the sufficiency of superficial knowledge and external charm were accepted by women themselves. "Perhaps the most perfect

feminine mind," said the sister of Sir Joshua Reynolds in her *Essay on Taste*, "habitually aims at nothing higher than an exemption from blame." "I hate," said Lady Bradshaigh, "to hear Latin out of a woman's mouth. There is something in it, to me, masculine. I could fancy such a one weary of the petticoat, and talking over a bottle." [1] Mrs. Hannah More, herself a woman of no little strength of character, accepted one of the most brutal things which a man has ever said of the intellect of woman. "But let her who is disposed to be elated with her literary acquisitions shock her vanity by calling to mind the just remark of Swift, 'that after all her boasted acquirements, a woman will, generally speaking, be found to possess less of what is called learning than a common schoolboy.'" [2] And again: "Pretensions to that strength of intellect which is requisite to penetrate into the abstruser walks of literature, it is presumed they will readily relinquish." [3] On the title page of her *Essays for Young Ladies* we find an ominous quotation from the speech of Pericles to the Athenian women: "Aspire only to those virtues that are Peculiar To Your Sex; follow your natural modesty, and think it your greatest commendation not to be talked of one way or another." The authority is fatal to the argument. The wife of Pericles, we know, was brought up according to his principles, and he showed his appreciation of the result by his prefer-

[1] To Richardson, 28th December, 1751.
[2] *Strictures*, I, 187. [3] *Essays*, 5.

ence for Aspasia. The natural complement of the Athenian wife was the hetaira or worse. Cloistered virtue is always stupid virtue, and so long as wives are dull, husbands will tend to be unfaithful. Did it never occur to Hannah More that marriage could never be permanent when every bond was loosed except that of animal passion?

She was not alone among women in holding these dangerous opinions. Mrs. Barbauld came to the conclusion that because women were not allowed to engage in professional and commerical employments, therefore they ought not to have the substantial education which such employments required. "A woman is not expected to understand the mysteries of politics, because she is not called to govern; she is not required to know anatomy, because she is not to perform surgical operations; she need not embarrass herself with theological disputes, because she will neither be called upon to make nor to explain creeds."[1] Again, she says of such things as natural history, astronomy, botany, and chemistry: "In these you will rather take what belongs to sentiment and to ability than abstract calculations or difficult problems. You must often be content to know a thing is so, without understanding the proof. . . . You cannot investigate, you may remember. . . . A woman ought to have that general tincture of them all which marks the cultivated mind. She ought to have enough of them to

[1] *Legacy to Young Ladies.*

engage gracefully in general conversation. In no subject is she required to be deep—of none ought she to be ignorant." [1] It is easy to see how views of this kind led to the circular argument which women encounter to this day. They are not fit for serious occupations, therefore they are not educated for them; and because they are not educated for them, they are not fit for them.

Mrs. Barbauld, indeed, was guilty of a much more serious offence than the publication of weak opinions. She deliberately checked a promising attempt to give woman a serious and scientific training. In the year 1775, Mrs. Elizabeth Montague proposed to found and endow a college for the higher education of women, and she offered the post of superintendent to Mrs. Barbauld. The latter replied in the following terms [2]: —"A kind of Literary Academy for Ladies (for that is what you seem to propose), where they are to be taught in a regular systematic manner the various branches of science, seems to me better calculated to form such characters as the Précieuses or the Femmes Sçavantes of Molière, than good wives or agreeable companions. . . . Young ladies, who ought only to have such a general tincture of knowledge as to make them agreeable companions to a man of sense, and to enable them to find rational entertainment for a solitary hour, should gain these accomplishments in a more quiet and unostentatious manner—subject to a regulation like that of the ancient Spartans, the thefts of know-

[1] *Legacy to Young Ladies.* [2] *Memoir*, xvi.

ledge in our sex are only connived at while carefully concealed, and if displayed, punished with disgrace." These sentiments were accepted by Mrs. Montague. The only woman who had at once sufficient energy and sufficient wealth to establish the education of English women on a rational basis, abandoned the project, and seventy years elapsed before it was revived.

During the whole of that period the great majority of girls were brought up on the principles laid down by the series of books now under review. These had one virtue in common. They represented a deliberate attempt to improve the understanding of women. But the authors had no knowledge of psychology. Very few of them had much knowledge of the feminine character. All of them were in greater or less degree, hampered by the iron fetters of convention. The result was that their systems tended rather to increase than to diminish the weaknesses of women. Here and there a pupil would be introduced to sound books, and would for herself find the road to wisdom. But the direct results of their teaching must in the ordinary case have been disastrous. It was not only that they discouraged strength; they deliberately set themselves to encourage weakness. Neither mind nor body was to be freely developed; both were to be repressed.

Thus Lord Kames declares that " women, destined by nature to be obedient, ought to be disciplined early to bear wrongs, without murmuring. . . .

Indulge gaiety, indulge laughter, indulge play, but still within moderate bounds. Draw them frequently from play to work, but in so soft a way as to prevent murmuring : custom will make the change easy, and produce in time entire submission to the mother's will. This is essential to the female sex, for ever subjected to the authority of a single person, or to the opinion of all." [1] Another writer says that " the female character should possess the mild and retiring virtues rather than the bold and dazzling ones ; great eminence in almost anything is sometimes injurious to a young lady ; whose temper and disposition should appear to be pliant rather than robust ; to be ready to take impressions rather than to be decidedly mark'd ; as great apparent strength of character, however excellent, is liable to alarm both her own and the other sex ; and to create admiration rather than affection.[2]

This writer, indeed, does not ignore the possibility of a need in single, or even in married life, for more robust qualities.

" Hence if to softness of manners, complacency of countenance, gentle unhurried motion, with a voice clear and yet tender, the charms which enchant all hearts ! can be superadded internal strength and activity of mind, capable to transact the business or combat the evils of life ; with a due sense of moral and religious obligation ; all is obtain'd, which education can supply, the female character becomes

[1] Kames, 256, 164.
[2] Darwin.

compleat, excites our love, and commands our admiration."

Strength and activity of mind are to be cultivated, if possible. But the softness, complacency, gentleness, and the rest of the negative virtues are to come first. These will enchant all hearts; the others are only useful. As the principal object of a girl's education was to enable her to enchant the heart of at least one member of the opposite sex, the writer is careful to indicate by a mark of exclamation the class which he considers the more important of the two. With a similar aversion from everything which savours of strength and dignity, he objects to excessive attention to music and dancing—

"As they consist in an exhibition of the person, they are liable to be attended with vanity, and to extinguish the blush of youthful timidity, which in young ladies is the most powerful of their external charms."

Private theatricals are equally perilous.

"The danger consists in this, lest the acquisition of bolder action, and a more elevated voice, should annihilate that retiring modesty, and blushing embarrassment, to which young ladies owe one of their most powerful external charms."

Countless passages could be selected from these works on education to prove that everything possible was done at this time to enervate the feminine character. Thus Mr. J. Bennet writes in

his *Strictures on Female Education*, that women should not enter upon studies which require intense application, because—

"The delicacy of the everlasting pea, which so happily unites elegance with sweetness, would be easily oppressed. The tender plant which is refreshed with gentle gales, would be entirely overwhelmed by a whirlwind."

While literature is bad, politics are even worse :—

"Women are not formed for political eminence or literary refinement. The softness of their nature, the delicacy of their frame, the timidity of their disposition, and the modesty of their sex, absolutely disqualify them for such difficulties and exertions. . . . In that ardour of understanding which rouses emulation, she would lose that soothing manner, which conciliates and endears. The world would be deprived of its fairest ornaments—life of its highest zest, and man of that gentle bosom, on which he can recline amidst the toils of labour and the agonies of disappointment."

Even Edmund Burke could descend to such stuff as this : "An air of robustness and strength is very prejudicial to beauty. An appearance of *delicacy*, and even of fragility, is almost essential to it. . . . I need here say little of the fair sex, where I believe the point will be easily allowed me. The beauty of women is considerably owing to their weakness or delicacy, and is even enhanced by their timidity, a quality of mind analogous to it."[1]

[1] *On the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Part III, sect. xvi.

Burke's opinion is only valuable as evidence of the prevailing taste. But another book, written by a comparatively insignificant man, had an immensely greater influence upon the condition of women. The most popular of all these authors was Dr. Gregory, whose *Legacy to his Daughters* was frequently reprinted, and was in fashion so late as the year 1877. Here is a characteristic passage :—

"When a girl ceases to blush, she has lost the most powerful charm of beauty. That extreme sensibility and weakness which it indicates may be a weakness and incumbrance in our sex, as I have too often felt; but in yours it is peculiarly engaging. Pedants, who think themselves philosophers, ask why a woman should blush when she is conscious of no crime! It is a sufficient answer, that nature has made you to blush when you are guilty of no fault, and has forced us to love you because you do so."

It is not surprising to find the same author continuing in this strain :—

"But though good health be one of the greatest blessings of life, never make a boast of it, but enjoy it in grateful silence. We so naturally associate the idea of female softness and delicacy with a

Compare Gibbon's statement in his panegyric on the German women, chap. vii. of the *Decline and Fall* : "Heroines of such a cast may claim our admiration, but they were most assuredly neither lovely nor very susceptible of love. Whilst they affected to emulate the stern virtues of *man*, they must have resigned that attractive softness in which principally consist the charm and weakness of *woman*."

correspondent delicacy of constitution, that when a woman speaks of her great strength, her extraordinary appetite, her ability to bear excessive fatigue, we recoil at the description in a way she is little aware of."

A rapid survey of this literature reveals a universal indulgence in mawkishness of this kind.

"It is by the arts of pleasing only, that women can attain to any degree of consequence or of power, and it is by pleasing only, that they can hope to become objects of love and affection. . . ."

Nothing is more fatal to a woman than to attempt to influence a man by reason, or by anything but caresses.

"Such a conduct in a woman is the same thing as it would be in a lion to fight with his hinder legs, or for a hare to face about and defy the teeth of the pursuing pack; it is neglecting to make use of what nature has furnished, and endeavouring to use what she has thought proper to deny." [1]

Two passages, quoted from other writers, are constantly to be found in these books. The first is taken from Rousseau's *Emile*:—

"Her's is a sovereignty founded on compliance and caresses: caresses are her orders, tears are her menaces. She governs in a family as a minister does in the State, procuring commands to be laid on her, for doing what she desires to do." [2]

A woman, in short, must not argue with her

[1] Alexander, 327, 324.

[2] See, for instance, Alexander, 336; Kames, 258.

husband. If she cannot reason him into doing what he thinks right, she must kiss him into doing what he thinks wrong. If this is not to degrade a wife into a concubine, what is it? Rousseau, indeed, is a bad authority to cite upon the influence of wives. When he wanted to send her children to the foundling hospital, what availed the caresses and tears of poor Therèse?

The second quotation is as ominous as the first. It is Milton's: —

> "For contemplation he and valour formed;
> For softness she, and sweet attractive grace;
> He for God only, she for God in him."

It is significant that both the men, whose emphasis of the sweetness and attractiveness of women is here so much admired, are remarkable in history for the cold brutality with which they treated their own women folk.

Two characteristics are apparent in almost all these books. The education of a girl is still mainly sexual, and the qualities which it is intended to produce are those of bodily and mental debility. The vital principle is that the girl is to be brought up as a companion for a man, not, however, a companion who will share in his serious occupations and strengthen him in his daily work, but a companion who shall never offend his vanity by any display of knowledge or wisdom. Alternative occupations are out of the question. She must not

think of ever taking part in business, a profession, or public affairs, nor must she ever attempt to acquire a profound knowledge of any of the three. Even when she studies she must not study deeply, but must simply acquire such a superficial knowledge as will enable her to take part in conversation. All the larger things of life are to be permanently excluded from her contemplation. In the home, in the narrowest sense of the term, she must remain from infancy to old age. As the destined companion of a man, she must devote herself to the cultivation of those qualities which attract men. Individuality she has none. She is the potential mother of male children, and she must be trained to exercise no other function ; and even such training as she has is directed rather towards getting a husband than keeping him ; towards marriage, rather than towards married life. In order to attract men she must not be bold and aggressive, she must be bashful and timid, displaying a weakness of mind and body which will appeal to men's superior strength, and afford them the pleasure of pursuit and the pride of conquest, the appearance of reluctance without any real freedom of rejection. A gentle voice, a downcast eye, a blushing cheek, and a shrinking frame, the outward and visible signs of that chastity which men required in a woman, those are the essential qualities.

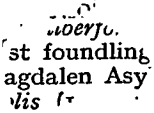
Upon this foundation it is indeed highly desirable that a structure of good sense and dignity should be

erected, so that the union of man and wife shall not incommode the former by perpetual association with a fool. Some of the educationists boldly contended that want of intellectual and bodily exercise accounted for all or nearly all the inferiority of women. But in their efforts to strengthen the understanding, all of them were striving after impossibilities. Strength of mind may conceivably accompany a cultivated debility of body. But in nine cases out of ten the two cannot go together. The first essential of a strong character is independence. A vigorous intellect could not flourish in the repression of frankness, decision, and readiness of speech and action, which was required to produce the external qualities of the eighteenth century young lady. The difficulty was made, if possible, greater by the fact that the system was not confined to producing vicious external qualities alone. To the systematic discouragement of vigour in action was added an equally systematic discouragement of vigour in thought. Young ladies were instructed that they must never pursue any of their studies below the surface. They were not permitted to trace causes, to survey facts in relation to other facts, to concentrate their minds upon study of any sort or description. From first to last they were impressed with the sense of dependence upon the superior wisdom of others, and of the absence of any need for reliance upon themselves. From the day when they first entered the schoolroom to the day when they were married, they never had the

advantages of scientific thinking, sustained effort, or the purposeful pursuit of a definite object of endeavour, without which no worthy character can ever be made.

The inevitable result of all this "delicacy," a word in which are summed up all the abominable vices of the feminine education of the period, was that the outlook of women was restricted, their emotions were left without the control of trained intellects, and their natural powers were never developed by experience. Even association with generous husbands, and practice in the management of households, would fail to redeem more than a small proportion from the effects of their early education. All that the ordinary woman could obtain from these was skill in domestic affairs, and nothing could make up the loss of intellectual discipline in the years when most impression is to be made. The larger activities were impossible to the great majority. They were thus incapable of sustained thought, incapable of generalization, deficient in organizing power, irresolute in action, insincere in speculation. The pyramid was balanced upon its apex, and wherever the natural bias towards good sense and virtue was not exceptionally strong, it inevitably toppled over into frivolity, jealousy, gossip, hysterics, and even worse. It is not surprising that the next generation of men had a poor opinion of the natural capacities of women. When we consider the ideals of these eighteenth-century reformers, and remember that the pupils of

this generation were the governesses of the next, we are disposed to marvel not that there were so many stupid women in England fifty years later, but that there should have been any women of sense.



CHAPTER IV

REVOLUTION AND MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

WHILE Evangelicalism united with the baser opinions of the early eighteenth century to degrade the intellects of women, social changes provided them with a new field of activity. Perhaps the most striking difference between the England of 1700 and the England of 1800 was that in the latter there existed a sense of social responsibility. The principle of aristocracy survived in full force. But it was recognized that aristocracy was an aggregation of duties as well as rights, and that it was incumbent upon the wealthy, in disposing of their wealth, to look to the benefit of others as well as to their own. This new spirit was largely the outcome of economic changes. The great growth of town populations, the decay of the yeomanry and the enclosure of common lands, long and expensive wars, artificial restrictions upon trade, bad national finance, and a reckless administration of poor relief, combined to produce forms of mendicity both more extensive and more conspicuous than it had ever been before. The spread of religious enthusi-

asm among the Wesleyans, the less emotional revival of opinion in the Evangelical Church of England, and the new doctrines of social brotherhood which came from France, turned the attention of men and women alike to works of charity. Ill-directed though it was, this spirit of benevolence, diffused through the wealthier classes, gave a new scope to the energies of women.[1] The foundation of hospitals, the institution of other methods of charitable relief,[2] the numerous attempts to establish schools for the children of the poor, and the reform of the administration of prisons were largely the work of women; and the names of Hannah More and Elizabeth Fry deserve honour only less than that which is paid to the memory of John Howard and Joseph Lancaster. This work had two important characteristics. It was not scientific. It consisted simply in the expression of feelings of goodwill, and made little demand upon the higher faculties of organization and direction. It was also in complete harmony with the precepts of orthodox religion, and involved no departure from the atmosphere of subordination and dependence. So far, therefore, as the bulk of English women were concerned, the administration of charity did little to strengthen and develop their intellectual powers.

[1] *Life of Wilberforce*, I, 238.

[2] The first foundling hospital was established in 1739, the first Magdalen Asylum in 1769 (Colquhoun's *Police of the Metropolis* (1795), 374–80). Colquhoun estimated the income of the London charities of his own day at £750,000 a year.

Exceptional women like Hannah More rose above the general level. But there was nothing in the new work which would prevent the majority from remaining as devoid of the more valuable mental qualities as the teaching of sentimentalists could make them.

But as the century drew to its close, stronger things were not wanting to stir the blood even of the meanest of English women. Strange doctrines were being preached, both in the old world and the new. The revolt of the American Colonies was followed by the French Revolution, and the contagion of liberty soon spread to England. Economic distress produced its inevitable results upon ignorance, and the folly of government aggravated and embittered reasonable discontent. Every established institution was examined and criticized with a ferocity which had been unknown since the days of the Great Rebellion. While the aristocracy thought languidly of duties, the common people talked fiercely of their rights. From every printing press poured forth streams of pamphlets, so that it seemed that neither King, nor Church, nor Parliament could stand against them. From the mere literature of liberty it might have been possible to shield the delicate creatures whom Dr. Gregory and Mrs. Chapone had formed. It was easy to put Tom Paine into the fire, and to suppress all references to the rights of man. But the facts were too big. The French people were killing a king, and massacring an aristocracy, and

pillaging a church, and laying profane hands upon the sacred edifice of property itself. The whole structure of society rocked to its foundations, and the din filled all the continent of Europe. While that stupendous tragedy was being enacted on the other side of the Channel, it was difficult, if not impossible, for the most domesticated English woman to confine her reasonings to the exact proportions of the eggs and butter which she was to bake into her cakes, or the different shades of wool which she was to work into her samplers. Whether they would or no, women became politicians.[1] The feminine correspondence of the period is full of references to the incidents of the Terror. The great parts played by women on both sides lent a new and startling interest to the scene. If all were astonished, most were terrified. Anna Seward went so far as to admire Charlotte Corday, and to sympathize with the cause of liberty. But the bulk of feminine opinion was emphatically on the side of Church and King. Most of the educated women belonged to the class in which Toryism found its greatest strength. Some of them were connected with the peerage; others sprang from the country gentry or the clergy of the Establishment. Nearly all of them were prosperous and contented. Their traditions were essentially aristocratic; they looked upon the common people as upon a race apart. They had been brought up in the settled conviction

[1] See Walpole's *Letters, passim.*

that it was their duty to labour among the poor, and they could not understand this fierce cry of the poor for power to labour for themselves.

Here and there an exception was to be found, a woman who knew the voice of liberty, harsh and dreadful as it then appeared. To these women, as to so many Englishmen of the time, the French Revolution was the sign of a new hope. One of them was Mary Wollstonecraft, and the great stir in Europe inspired her to make the first passionate protest against subjection which ever sprang from the pen of an Englishwoman. Her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was published in 1792, and from that time the movement for emancipation has never ceased. The reputation of Mary Wollstonecraft has suffered the usual fate of those of thinkers whose thoughts impinge directly against the conventions of their day. She was the object of the scorn and hatred of most of her contemporaries, and immorality and irreligion were freely imputed to her for long after her death. The growth of literary and political generosity has now permitted a juster estimate. She had suffered great hardships, both as a child and as a woman, and was often too comprehensive in her antagonism and too bitter in her expression of it. But she was at heart a woman whom no one can honestly call anything but good. Her sisters, who lived on the earnings of her labour until she became notorious, and then deserted her, could testify to the strength of her family affections. Pity, tenderness, and sympathy she had in

unlimited measure, and those who know the value of anger in a society where there is only too much of the weakness of acquiescence, will welcome rather than condemn her large and generous indignation. Her reputation was, indeed, rather the consequence of her opinions than an impartial estimate of her character, and lapse of time enables us to see her in a true perspective. The higher criticism has almost restored her orthodoxy, and her views on the condition of women are now held by large and increasing numbers of both sexes. The great error of her life was her union with Imlay. Upon this posterity, in forming a judgment of her whole character, will naturally lay less stress than could her contemporaries. It would indeed be absurd to class a partnership such as this, in which on her side there was nothing of base or unworthy passion, with the sensualities of people like Rousseau and Madame de Warens. But the value of Mary Wollstonecraft to posterity lies in her fidelity, her courage, her hatred of insincerity and oppression and her anticipation of modern thought, and the exact degree of censure which should be passed upon her fault need not be discussed here.[1]

Mary Wollstonecraft was not a genius of the first order, and her book has more than one serious defect. It is sadly wanting in system and arrangement. It abounds in unnecessary repetitions. It

[1] For a full account of Mary Wollstonecraft, see Kegan Paul's edition of her *Letters to Imlay*, and *Mary Wollstonecraft*, by E. R. Pennell.

is marred by constant faults of expression.[1] But these errors are those of enthusiasm in a good cause, the most pardonable of all. Greater precision of thought and language would have made the *Rights of Woman* a greater book than it is. But, as it stands, it has no little of that burning and fiery insight which pierces into the very heart of human things, and in virtue of that alone it will always merit a place among the books which count in history.

The spirit of the whole work was very different from that of the sentimentalists who are described in the preceding pages. To them, woman was an artificial product, trained to display certain negative and superficial qualities, and the sole object of her training was the attraction of some member of the opposite sex. All her individuality was merged in her sex. Mary Wollstonecraft struck a truer note. With much less command of logic than "Sophia," she had ten times as much feeling. To her, woman was first and foremost an individual, having her own powers and capacities, capable of being developed, if not to the same level as man, at least

[1] Here is a specimen of the author at her worst: "Yet shaking hands thus as it were with corruption, one foot on earth, the other with bold stride, mounts to heaven, and claims kindred with superior natures. Virtues, unobserved by man, drop their balmy fragrance at this cool hour, and the thirsty land, refreshed by the pure streams of comfort that suddenly gush out, is crowned with smiling verdure; this is the living green on which that eye may look with complacency that is too pure to behold iniquity!"

to a much higher level than she had ever been allowed to attain. She made no pretensions on behalf of women to superiority, or even to equality in the human order. She agreed that women were, on the average, both physically and mentally inferior to men.[1] But within the limits of their natural capacities, she urged that they should be given the fullest opportunity of development. She refused to attach a sex to either virtue or wisdom, and allowed no distinction between men and women in essential things. It was true that women often displayed petty faults, but these were defects which a better education would remove. Unregulated emotions inevitably produced disorders in conduct, but they would be held thoroughly in check by a systematically developed intellect. When all sound knowledge was denied to women, how could they be expected to show signs of wisdom? When all their attention was concentrated on their external charms, how could they be expected to possess the hidden but more enduring virtues? The first necessity for all women, as for all men, was a scientific training of the mind.

She assailed with characteristic vigour the idea that any person could be virtuous who was ignorant. Virtue was a thing of reason and not of mere sentiment, and consisted simply in the deliberate control of the emotions by the intellect. A sound understanding was the first essential of a good character, and a superficial appearance of restraint was worth-

[1] See pp. 59, 70, 75. I quote from thereprint of 1891.

less. "The regulation of the behaviour is not modesty, though those who study rules of decorum are, in general, termed modest women." [1] "It is a farce to call any being virtuous whose virtues do not result from the exercise of its own reason." [2] "Complicated rules to adjust behaviour are a weak substitute for simple principles." [3] "The grand source of female folly and vice has ever appeared to me to arise from narrowness of mind." [4] "To give an example of order, the soul of virtue, some austerity of behaviour must be adopted, scarcely to be expected from a being who, from its infancy, has been made the weathercock of its own sensations." [5] "Make the heart clean, and give the head employment, and I will venture to predict that there will be nothing offensive in the behaviour." [6] These maxims, which to-day appear but the sorriest of truisms, expressed startling and dangerous doctrines when originally applied to the education of women, There is hardly a single point in which she did not anticipate modern opinion, and the most orthodox posterity, faced with the strong common sense of her main argument, will not think hardly of her because in the course of it she contended incidentally for greater freedom of divorce, and against eternal damnation.

The most important passages of her book are those in which she emphasizes the individuality of every member of her sex. She had no mercy on

[1] p. 188. [2] p. 52. [3] p. 55. [4] p. 96. [5] p. 114. [6] p. 155.

the sexual egoists who cultivated in women only those qualities which excited desire in men, and her plain speaking on this matter was probably the chief cause of her unpopularity among the high priests of "delicacy." She knew that every woman who found her beauty a sufficient compensation for strength of mind was thereby encouraged to neglect her higher faculties, and to make charm of face and figure an excuse for dishonesty of mind and heart. Sex was important, but it was not all. Maternity was the noblest of duties, but self-reverence was the first of virtues. A woman was a human being first and a woman afterwards. So long as attention was concentrated on her sex, she and the men to whom she was thus attached were both deteriorated. "This desire of being always women, is the very consciousness that degrades the sex."[1] "The grand end of their exertions should be to unfold their own faculties and acquire the dignity of conscious virtue."[2] The cant of "indirect influence," the subordination of reason to sex, she abhors. "I do not want them to have power over men, but over themselves."[3] "It is not empire, but equality and friendship which women want." "Speaking of women at large, their first duty is to themselves as rational creatures, and the next, in point of importance, as citizens, is that, which includes so many, of a mother."

In thus arguing for the spiritual independence of women, and their emancipation from the false

[1] p. 156. [2] p. 58. [3] p. 107.

sexual bondage in which they had been placed, Mary Wollstonecraft anticipated many of the subsequent improvements in their state. She contends that women ought to possess the Parliamentary franchise,[1] and that they ought to be allowed to engage freely in industry, and particularly in the practice of medicine. She recognized that it was only economic independence of their husbands which would enable married women to retain their mental as well as their bodily liberty, and that only the same independence would protect the unmarried from prostitution. Upon the duties of women as wives and mothers she laid great stress, and repeatedly urged that the best mother was the woman who had herself received a thorough intellectual training, and was thus best able to perform those maternal duties of education which are to the full as important to the race as bearing and nursing children. She also pointed out what most of her contemporaries overlooked, that the stability of society depended upon the stability of the family, and repeated in numerous passages the trite and well-worn argument that there could be no security for a union when one of the parties had no attractions for the other but those which belonged to her sex. Her boldest glance into the future was perhaps her belief in mixed education, in which will probably be found to lie the best remedy for our

[1] Fox alluded to the enfranchisement of women in a speech delivered on the 26th May, 1797. He treated it as an absurdity.

present hypertrophy of sex. Nature, she said, would assert itself. But unless every natural faculty was given equal development, Nature would assert itself, as it did in so many women of her day, in disastrous ways. So long as men prescribed the conditions of women's lives, so long sex would be developed at the expense of all their other faculties. Let women look after themselves, and all would be well.

The immediate effect of this book was not great. The end of the eighteenth century was a bad time for new thoughts, and especially for new thoughts about women. Such a book could only find favour among women who were at once well educated and discontented. Such a combination of characteristics was hard to find. Those who were educated were satisfied, those who were restless could not read. It is easy to understand why a book which bore such an ominous title, which was written by such a woman, which preached such novel doctrines, was banned by nine-tenths of the women who had wealth, leisure, and influence. Its very name savoured of the infamous Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*. Its author was credited with being an atheist. She had already, in her reply to Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, published an attack on political principles which they held with all the tenacity of religious bigots. The *Rights of Woman* only carried the spirit of revolution still further into the recesses of the contented mind. The instincts of its feminine readers drove them

irresistibly into the opposite camp. They believed in monarchy and aristocracy as ardently as they believed in property in land, and in the subjection of women as ardently as in the literal inspiration of the Old Testament. Anna Seward alone, in spite of her superficial vulgarity, felt something of the truth.[1] Mrs. Barbauld wrote a poem, entitled *The Rights of Woman*, of which the couplet—

> "Soft melting tones thy thundering cannon's roar,
> Blushes and fears thy magazine of war,"

will sufficiently indicate the quality. The rest were too much concerned with the defence of the remaining institutions of the country, and most of them, like Hannah More, probably condemned the book unread.[2] Here and there the seed fell on good ground; but during the black and bitter period of Tory reaction which followed its publication, when everything new was by its very newness not only wrong but bad, it had no better chance than other chapters of the gospel of freedom. Two generations of women were brought up in the shadow of Dr. Gregory before the first good fruit was gathered.

The emancipation of women did not depend upon the success or failure of any particular book. The great social changes are, as a rule, produced less by

[1] Letter to Mr. Whalley, 26th February, 1792; to Mrs. Jackson, 13th February, 1798; to H. Repton, 13th April, 1798.

[2] Walpole's *Letters*: to Hannah More, 21st August, 1792; Hannah More's reply to Walpole is given in her *Memoirs*, by W. Roberts, III, 370.

the work of individual thinkers than by a certain native and independent rationalism operating in great masses of men and women. Between the appearance of the *Rights of Woman* and the beginning of the reign of Queen Victoria, when the surface of society was first agitated, several causes joined to give impetus to the women's movement. Some are directly traceable to the volcanic upheaval of opinion which we call the French Revolution, others to the concurrent changes in industrial organization. It was inevitable that the Revolution should influence the condition of women as well as that of men. Its immediate effect was to inspire reformers with a new hope and a new energy. This rapid advance was followed by a strong reaction. But after the conclusion of the great war the progressive forces again gathered strength. Less, indeed, was heard of theory, but more was seen of practical improvement. The Whigs hated the idea of natural rights. But the repeal of the Test Act, the emancipation of the Catholics, the reform of Parliament, and the establishment of municipal corporations upon a representative basis, were perhaps a more valuable tribute to the authors of the *Contrat Social* and the *Rights of Man* than any amount of lip service. These outward and visible changes were the signs of a profound alteration in spirit. The principle of aristocracy was not only assailed in the outwork of constitutional forms, it was being slowly stifled in the citadel of the human heart. When the people

declared that a Churchman should have no more privileges than a Dissenter or a Catholic, and that a Peer had no more right to nominate a member of the House of Commons than a commoner, they meant that a Churchman was, in their estimate, no better than a Dissenter or a Catholic, and a Peer no better than one of themselves. The Revolution meant the annihilation of status, the destruction of the barriers of birth and fortune, and the liberation of individuality, the assertion of rights instead of the acknowledgment of duties, and the study of mankind as an aggregate of units, and not as a perpetual association of unalterable classes. It was, of course, wider and deeper than mere politics. It laid the foundations of the whole of modern realism, by which each separate unit in a class, whether it be a human being, or a religion, or a work of art, is tested upon its own merits, upon its social value, upon its power to benefit or to injure the race as a whole, and not according to any preconceived theory or dogma. It thus established in the human mind the ideas of change and progress. Prior to the Revolution the basis of judgment was the question "Does it conform?" After the Revolution it was "What is it worth?" Every privilege and every establishment was thus exposed to persistent examination. But economic conditions made politics the most urgent subject of inquiry, and it was upon social grades and distinctions that the light was at first most fiercely directed. While the public mind was in this condition at home, the

ideas of Mary Wollstonecraft tended to become common property. When monarchy and aristocracy seemed everywhere to be on the point of destruction, it was impossible that men and women should not inquire whether the principle of aristocracy did not operate elsewhere than among men, whether there was not a peerage of sex as well as a peerage of dignities and titles, whether the divine right of man was any more to be supported than the divine right of kings, and whether the men who still controlled the Government were after all any better than the women whom they governed.[1]

The psychological change was not confined to politics. Philosophical speculation had indeed begun in England before the days of Voltaire. But the dissolution of the ancient order in France gave as great a stimulus to enquiry in religion as in politics. Even in England, where courageous thinking in religious matters has always been very rare, the spirit of rationalism spread apace. One of its effects must have been to weaken the theological sanction of the subjection of women. A man who looked upon Saint Peter and Saint Paul in the same light as he looked upon Bacon or Descartes, as leaders of opinion whose teaching could claim no supernatural authority, would be less likely to accept their views of the position of women than a man who believed them to be inspired of God. While the Evangelical Tories leaned in the direction of restraint, the free-thinking Radicals were

[1] See Blackburn, *Record of Women's Suffrage* (1902), 14.

strongly inclined towards emancipation. Mary Wollstonecraft herself was a free-thinker, and so were her associates, the Godwinites. Bentham and the Utilitarians generally held the complete equality of the sexes, so far as artificial opportunities were concerned, as a main principle of their faith.[1] All these, including John Stuart Mill himself, were hostile to the fundamental Christian dogmas.

The effect of Christianity upon the condition of women has been strangely mixed. By its insistence upon chastity as an ideal, and by the importance which it attached to the altruistic qualities of gentleness and forbearance, the early Church did much for women that was good. But it may be questioned whether the ascetic notions, which made sex an unclean thing, degraded the wife in the presence of her husband, and excluded women from all the principal offices of the Church, did not do as much harm in the one direction as the nobler doctrines did good in the other. Catholicism, indeed, while emphasizing the subjection of women to men in ordinary life, did no little, by the monastic system, to invest the women of a limited class with very considerable dignity and influence. But in England Christianity, after the Reformation, was in the grip of a hard and unlovely Church, which inherited, in this respect, all the vices and none of the virtues of its parent. The subjection of the wife remained, but the independence of the abbess was gone. The attitude of English religious bodies has been liberal

[1] *Autobiography of John Stuart Mill*, p. 104.

almost in proportion to the dissidence of their dissent, and the vigour with which they have repudiated dogma. The Quakers have always placed women upon an equality with men. The Unitarians, the Independents or Congregationalists, the Baptists, the Presbyterians, and the Wesleyans follow in the order of their heterodoxy. To the Established Church women owe little gratitude. It has lost the spirituality of Catholicism without acquiring the passion for individual freedom, which is the characteristic virtue of Nonconformity. It gave no help in education. It hung back from the crusade against the Contagious Diseases Acts. Its timidity, indifference, and hostility are the common experience of all Suffragists. But in the last sixty years it has made great strides. In the early nineteenth century it was as dull, as dogmatic, and as worldly a religious body as could have been found in the whole earth, and the constant enemy of freedom. While the union of scepticism with early feminism may have been to some extent a coincidence, arising out of a characteristic repudiation of authority in every form, it was probably due in no small measure to the fact that the subjection of women had been for many years an essential part of dogmatic religion, and that those who questioned the doctrines of the Evangelical Church leant naturally against the worst of its precepts. To the founder of Christianity, women, in common with every other class of the oppressed, are under vast obligations. To Christianity, as an organized body of opinion, maintained

by an organized society, they owe no little part of several centuries of degradation.[1] It was only as the influence of reason was brought to bear upon the prodigious accumulations of theology that the individual liberty of the original obtained free play. In proportion as ecclesiasticism lost its hold upon the mind, the freedom of women had space to grow.

Mere political and religious speculation were not the only forces at work upon the condition of English women. Among the most potent of all was Byronism, the embodiment of the whole spirit of revolution. The glorification of self, which was the characteristic vice of Byron and his disciples, was carried far beyond the social limits. There was a cant of Byronism, as well as a cant of Evangelicalism. But this passionate striving against the fetters of the old conventions was the inevitable product of the existing order. Revolutions of the mind are as much proportioned to the necessity for them as are changes in political institutions. That Byronism, when once its necessary work of destruction was completed, degenerated into egoism, cynicism, and despair, does not alter the fact that on the whole it rendered an immense service to English thought. In so far as there had been established in England a false and sickly ideal of

[1] See the *Letters of Charles Kingsley*, fifth edition (1879), II, 247; Donaldson, *Women in Greece and Rome*, Book III. The whole subject is discussed in Lecky's *European Morals*, Vol. II. For a modern example, see the Dean of Canterbury's defence of the Marriage Service of the Church, in the *Daily News*, 16th Feb., 1912.

domesticity, involving the maintenance of women in a perpetual mist of Bowdlerism, Byron cleared the social mind of cant. The blast was tremendous, and many for a time sought refuge from it in yet profounder depths of mawkishness and sentimentality. But from the eyes of the majority it drove away the cloud of false ideals and left a clearer vision of things as they were. In particular, it destroyed the artificially stimulated mystery of sex, and while it forced men and women to regard the facts with greater sincerity, it enabled them to see the facts in their right relations. After Byron, to adapt a famous phrase, "delicacy" was not only dead, but damned. With all its excess, the ultimate effect of his work was to make men and women more pure, because it made them more honest. In the conception of woman, sex thus tended to become merely one of an aggregate of faculties, each of which deserved equal cultivation. As she ceased to be a purely sexual creature her intellectual emancipation began. Of himself, Byron contributed nothing to the positive work. But he did for the education of women what he did in other fields for men. He cleared the ground of its accumulations of eighteenth-century rubbish, and upon it others, more learned than he in the science of construction, were able to erect a new and a nobler edifice.

Accompanying these psychological changes there took place alterations no less important in the

economic state of England. Whether economics or psychology provide the readiest explanation of historical phenomena is a question which will always be disputed. As a rule, changes in thought and changes in social conditions march pretty closely together. This was the case of English women. The industrial revolution entirely altered their position in society, and forced them into adoption of the new opinions. The factory system put an end to many of the home industries which had hitherto formed so large a part of the domestic occupation of women. In the intervals of her purely household duties, the mother of a family had been accustomed to spin and weave, to bake and brew, to make lace, to cut out cloth, and, with the help of her daughters, to supplement the income of the father by performing many of the operations which are now allotted to factory labour. The introduction of the new system made a profound alteration in the industrial condition of women. In her cottage she could not hope to compete with the power-loom and the spinning-jenny. One of two things must happen: she must stay at home and lose her work, or she must follow the work into the factory. In the great majority of cases the latter process took place, and from it has followed more than one important consequence. Women's place can no longer be said to be the home. Sheer economic pressure has driven her into the industrial world, and has exposed her to all the evils of forced competition. The appearance of the woman factory worker has brought its

own problems: low wages, physical deterioration, and a great increase in the conditions which favour prostitution. But from their new situation women derived one great advantage. As the change from home work to factory work proceeded, women learnt to rely more upon themselves. For the first time in their history, they found themselves outside the cramped circle of domesticity. They held communication with each other outside the narrow walls of their homes. They became conscious that they were individuals, who might have interests and enthusiasms apart from those incident to their relations with men. They began to learn the value of organization,[1] and to assert themselves as members of industrial society. These subtle changes must at first have taken place very slowly. The economic change which produced them extended over a long period of years, and the want of education which retarded their growth in the minds of men was coupled, in the case of women, with the influence of male egoism and long tradition. But slowly and surely the alteration in outlook took place, and the appearance of women, side by side with men, in the political disturbances of the early nineteenth century, preceded only by a short space the time when they

[1] See Eden, *State of the Poor, passim*; and the *Memoirs of Hannah More*, for some account of the early benefit societies and sick clubs established by women. So far as I can find, Eden was the first man who interested himself in the condition of working women. He has some very sympathetic passages at the end of his first volume.

began to realize that they had grievances of their own.[1]

While this was the state of affairs among the women of the working class, the women of the middle class experienced a corresponding change. The middle class itself was almost entirely a product of the new economic conditions. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the aristocracy, the yeomen, and the labourers made up almost the whole of society. The learned professions were few, and many of their members were in dignity little above the level of shopkeepers or domestic servants. The importance of the merchants and shipowners was small compared to that which they possessed a hundred years later, and the large capitalist employer of labour was practically unknown. But at the beginning of the reign of Queen Victoria there existed many thousands of families who were sharply distinguished by their wealth and importance from artisans and tradespeople, and claimed for themselves a dignity which had nothing to do with birth. It was among the women of this class that the final emancipation began. As compared with the women of the industrial class, they laboured under many disadvantages. The household occupations which had filled much of the time of women of the preceding generation, were now transferred to factories. Baking, brewing, and the making of clothes and

[1] See Bamford's *Passages in the Life of a Radical* (18), 141. For a brutal reference to these women by Castlereagh, see *Hansard*, I, xli., 391.

household linen were no longer in the list of their duties. Much time, therefore, was left, to be filled up by barren accomplishments or by serious employment. The economic pressure which enforced a rough sort of independence upon poorer women affected a much smaller proportion of the middle class. But gradually the same tendencies began to make themselves felt, and the necessity of earning a livelihood drove into self-reliance many women who thirty years before would have remained secluded, dependent, and enervated.

The hardships which these women experienced were in their kind more terrible than those of the working classes. Brought up in the schools of Bowdler and Chapone, a woman whom the chances of trade and commerce thrust from security into penury was more helpless than one who had always been accustomed to exacting labour. The opportunities were as few as the growth of population made the demand great. These women could not work in factories, in shops, or in domestic service. All the professions were closed. Custom as well as incapacity prevented them from engaging in trade. The only employment which a gentlewoman could enter without a loss of caste was that of a governess. The first half of the nineteenth century thus saw a large increase in the numbers of these women, themselves for the most part entirely without education, yet devoting themselves to the education of others. The first attempts to provide higher mental training for women were made with the

definite object of raising the intellectual standard of this class. Following upon these there came a gradual but steady entrance of women into occupations hitherto reserved for men, from the medical profession down to those commercial employments which have since become almost a monopoly of their sex.

CHAPTER V

THE GREAT REVIVAL

ECONOMIC changes and the publication of new thoughts together produced the mental activity which has been described in the last chapter. The essence of the new movement among women was the realization of individuality. Men had hitherto almost universally regarded women as attached, for good purposes or bad, to themselves, and women had similarly regarded themselves as the subordinates and the dependents of men. While men naturally clung to the old traditions, a new spirit was to be observed among women. This new spirit found a marked expression, not merely in the acceptance of independent work as an economic necessity, but in the search for it as an end in itself, as a means by which a woman could strengthen and develop her own character. This was the discovery of individuality: not, as hitherto, by isolated women like "Sophia" and Mary Wollstonecraft, but by women as a class. The most striking feature of the time is the extent to which women began to assert their own opinions, and to regard themselves as independent units of society. In

1831 Mrs. John Sandford published a book entitled *Woman: in her Social and Domestic Character*, which reached its fourth edition in three years. This work reproduced all the vices of the evangelic sentimentalists. It abounds in references to woman's "subordinate station," "strictly feminine deportment," and "those Christian tempers which sit so engagingly upon the female sex." "Female exertions," says the author, "should be always strictly subordinate." The more women show their need of support, the more engaging they are. "Nothing is so likely to conciliate the affection of the other sex as a feeling that women look to them for guidance and support." Here we are little removed from Gregory and Bowdler. But in 1833 appeared Mrs. Anne Jameson's *Characteristics of Women*, which sounds a deeper note. "It appears to me," says one of the persons in the introductory dialogue, "that the condition of women in society, as at present constituted, is false in itself, and injurious to them,—that the education of women, as at present conducted, is founded in mistaken principles, and tends to increase fearfully the sum of misery and error in both sexes." Ten years later came Mrs. Hugo Reid's *Plea for Women*, the best work of its kind before Mill's *Subjection of Women*, and, in relation to its time, perhaps the best that has ever been written on the subject by a woman. Though temperate in her language, the author is vigorous enough in her thought. "It is but too true," she says, "that the

greater portion of womankind are, at present, so slavish in their spirits, as to have no thought, no wish for emancipation. They have worn the shameful chain so long, as to have become insensible to the degradation. They feel not that they wear it at all, till oppression forces on them the unwelcome knowledge. This indolence and servility of mind ought not, however, to be considered inherent: it is to be attributed solely to the operation of those social arrangements of which we complain; and this very result is the most convincing proof that the principles on which they are founded are wrong." [1]

It was not common as yet for a woman to make such open protest against subjection. But a study of contemporary documents reveals more than one proof that similar feelings existed in many quarters. Feminine diaries and letters of this period differ widely from those of the "blue-stockings." There is less acquiescence in existing conditions, discontent is sharply and openly expressed. "I wondered," says one girl, "to hear Mr. Palgrave talk about woman as if only those like Lady Maria in Arthur's story were to be admired. I don't much fancy men often understand women; they don't know how restless and weary they get." [2] "I conceive," says another, "that when patience has done its utmost and industry its best, . . . and when both are

[1] p. 92.

[2] *Memoir of Anne Jemima Clough*, by B. A. Clough, p. 75 (1849). Compare pp. 62, 74.

baffled, and pain and want triumph, the sufferer is free, is entitled at last to send up to Heaven any piercing cry for relief, if by that cry he can hope to obtain succour."[1] These passionate stirrings of the spirit should be contrasted with the smug complacency with which the men of the period still regarded women. "Their most charming study," says one of these writers, "is the modest, the winning display of those accomplishments that increase the magic of their charms; their dearest employment is gracefully to flit through all the mazes of the labyrinth of love; and the noblest aim of their existence is to generate beings who, as women, may tread in the footsteps of their mothers, or, as men, may excel in the higher virtues which these, to them softer and sweeter occupations, render it impossible that they themselves should attain."[2] Resentment against this eighteenth-century cant of womanhood found an outlet in a bold demand for larger opportunities. "Most desirable is it," says Charlotte Brontë, "that all, both men and women, should have the power and the will to work for themselves—most advisable that sons and daughters should early be inured to habits of independence

[1] Charlotte Brontë in *The Brontës*, by C. K. Shorter, I, 418 (1848).

[2] A. Walker, *Woman*, second edition, 1849. The pages of *Punch*, ever a faithful record of conventional opinion, expresses throughout this period the same cant of sentiment. Women are seldom described except as "the dear things" or "the dear creatures." See, for example, the *Almanac for* 1853.

and industry."[1] "A woman who works is by that alone better than one who does not; and a woman who does not happen to be rich and who still earns no money and does not wish to do so, is guilty of a great fault, almost a crime. . . . Work or degradation is the lot of all except the very small number born to wealth."[2] Marriage thus ceases to be the only object of a girl's life. "Believe me, teachers may be hard-worked, ill-paid, and despised, but the girl who stays at home doing nothing is worse off than the hardest-wrought and worst-paid drudge of a school. Whenever I have seen, not merely in humble, but in affluent homes, families of daughters sitting waiting to be married, I have pitied them from my heart."[3] It would be possible to read many thousands of pages of the eighteenth century literature of woman without encountering a single such tribute to the dignity of labour.[4]

While these ideas were slowly taking shape, a few women entered boldly into the work of the world. They no longer confined their public ser-

[1] *The Brontës*, I, 422 (1848).

[2] Mary Taylor in *The Brontës*, II 13, (1850).

[3] *The Brontës*, II, 57 (1849). Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* (1849) should be read, with its constant expression of the same idea.

[4] See also Anna Jameson's *Sisters of Charity* and *Communion of Labour* (1859); *Memorials of Two Sisters* (the Winkworths), by Margaret J. Shaen (1908), pp. 19, 61; Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1856) should be compared with Hannah More's *Bas Bleu* (1784), as well as with Tennyson's *Princess* (1847).

vices to the unsystematic administration of charity. Mrs. Marcet enjoyed a considerable name as an economist. Mary Somerville acquired a solid reputation as a mathematician and astronomer. Harriet Martineau wrote regularly for the *Daily News*, and preached the gospel of Free Trade with wonderful success in a series of popular tales. The novels of the Brontës and George Eliot surpassed the works of Jane Austen and Maria Edgeworth as much in power and imagination as those surpassed the efforts of Mrs. Radcliffe in subtlety and grace. All these women, it is true, were regarded as freaks of nature, and it is not insignificant that the novelists wrote under the names of men. But they established the intellectual position of women on a popular basis, a foundation of infinitely greater strength than that upon which the "blue-stockings." had left it. Intellect had ceased to be the privilege of the aristocracy; it had become the common property of every woman. Even though the majority of the sex was still plunged in ignorance, the example of such women as Harriet Martineau and Mary Somerville remained, to inspire and to encourage all those who laboured to raise the standard of general education.

Even more remarkable than the achievements of individual women was the extent to which the sex began to intrude into politics. For some time past great ladies had thrown open their drawing-rooms to the leading statesmen of the day. But they seldom made public affairs a serious business. The

student of their correspondence can hardly fail to draw the conclusion that women like Lady Jersey and Lady Holland cared less for politics than for the reputation of being politicians.[1] The new women of the middle class looked upon matters of State with other eyes. They had a personal interest in the right solution of the problems with which they dealt. For the first time in the history of England organizations of women were created for the purpose of influencing Government. At the great Anti-Slavery Conference of 1840, the woman delegates from America were excluded from the proceedings, and returned home to commence an agitation for enfranchisement.[2] But the Anti-Corn Law League prided itself upon its band of women-workers.[3] On the 26th February, 1851, the Sheffield Female Political Association passed a resolution in favour of Woman Suffrage, the first of its kind to be passed in England by a society of women.[4] The work of Miss Florence Nightingale in the Crimea furnished an example not only of tenderness and self-sacrifice, but of organizing power of a very high order. The Social Science Congress, established in 1857, provided a means by which ordinary women could take part in the serious and systematic

[1] There is an interesting article on this subject in the *Quarterly Review* for April, 1910.

[2] *History of Women's Suffrage* (New York, 1881), I, 3.

[3] Prentice, *History of the Anti-Corn-Law League*, I, 70, 171. Cobden and Villiers were both supporters of Women Suffrage.

[4] Blackburn, *Record of Women's Suffrage*, 20.

discussion of economic and moral problems. The Ladies' Sanitary Association first met in 1859.[1] The *Englishwoman's Journal*, the first woman's paper which was actually an organ of feminine opinion, and not merely an encouragement to feminine frivolity, was founded in 1858. In the following year its proprietors opened a Register of Women's Work. This was soon developed into the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women, and the systematic training of women for commercial employments was thus established.[2]

With all this activity, progress was still painfully slow. Feminine effort was almost always irregular and unscientific. Extraordinary genius might overcome the difficulties of environment. But ninety-nine women out of a hundred were still without real education, and no great improvement could take place among people who could neither form ideals nor make a persistent effort to attain them. Precise and accurate thinking was the first essential, and of precise and accurate thinking very few women were yet capable. The vast majority of them were no better educated in 1860 than they were in 1660. After two centuries of progress in industry, in politics, in literature, in every department of human activity, except the fine arts, the

[1] *Letters of Charles Kingsley*, II, 95.

[2] The Journal and the Register were the work of Barbara Leigh Smith (Mrs. Bodichon), Bessie Rayner Parkes (Mrs. Belloc), Jessie Boucherett, and Adelaide Anne Procter.

average Englishman was more careful and more systematic in training his horse or his dog than in training his own daughters, and this barbarous neglect was practised until well within the memory of persons not yet past middle age.

In 1867 a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the state of education in England. So little was thought of the importance of girls' schools that they were not even within the original scope of its labours. At the request of a few influential women the Commissioners consented to include them, and their Report embraces all but a small number in one comprehensive denunciation. Among the wealthy classes girls were seldom sent to school at all. When they were sent they were generally the victims of methods of instruction which had long been discarded even in village elementary schools.[1] The majority of parents seemed to be careless whether their daughters became wise or not.

The Commissioners ascribed this parental indifference to two causes, both of which are well known to the student of eighteenth-century education. The first was the inveterate prejudice that girls were less capable of mental cultivation than boys, and the second the opinion that solid attainments would impair their chances of marriage.[2] "Men are afraid of clever women," said a lady to one of the

[1] See the article by Sir Joshua Fitch in the *Victoria Magazine*, II, 434 (1864).

[2] Report, 546, 570

witnesses.[1] The Commissioners gravely point out that "the most material service may be rendered to the husband, in the conduct of his business and the most serious branches of his domestic affairs, by a wife trained and habituated to a life altogether different from that of mere gentleness and amiability of which we have spoken."[2] That such a commonplace observation should have been regarded as worthy of inclusion in the Report of a Royal Commission is sufficient evidence of the condition of the masculine mind of the period.

The Commissioners found certain vices in almost every girls' school; "want of thoroughness and foundation, want of system, slovenliness and showy superficiality, inattention to rudiments, undue time given to accomplishments, and those not taught intelligently or in any scientific manner; want of organization."[3] To these faults of intellectual training was added neglect of bodily exercise,[4] and the Commissioners did not fail to point out that if both mind and body were thus left without careful discipline in youth, it could hardly be expected that adult women should be sound in either. In the majority of schools the theory of education was still the theory of Dr. Gregory. The eighteenth-century system, with all its false sentiment, its insistence upon the supremacy of sex over every other faculty, and its cultivation of the superficial

[1] *Report*, 547, n. See the *Diary of H. Crabbe Robinson*, I, 135.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 548. [3] *Ibid.*, 548. [4] *Ibid.*, 552.

at the expense of the essential, remained in full operation forty years ago.

This Report not only throws light on the condition of women at the time when it was published. but goes far to explain the prejudice against the intrusion of women into serious affairs, which still exists in the minds of men, and has been a formidable obstacle to their admission to public employment of every kind. This prejudice, often directed against trained women, is largely derived from an unhappy experience of women who have never been trained at all. The country is still full of women of independent means, who have suffered the conventional education of thirty years ago without having their natural capacities strengthened by any rough experience of life. They have had neither the discipline of good schooling nor the discipline of adversity. When women of this kind interfere in public affairs, the conduct of business is of necessity little improved. It is not surprising that women, whose only qualifications are energy and goodwill, should display narrowness of mind and a deplorable want of system in everything which they undertake.[1] But these are the defects which are displayed by untrained men as well as by untrained women. They are the defects not of sex, but of ignorance; want of proportion, inability to grasp large aggregations of facts, irreso-

[1] How could Mrs. Jellyby, in *Bleak House*, educated on the lines prescribed by Gregory and Bowdler, have been anything but what she was?

lution in difficulty, the subordination of reason to sentiment. The "strong-minded" women of male prejudice are not strong-minded at all. They are weak-minded; strength of mind is the quality which they most conspicuously lack. They were brought up before the work of Miss Buss and Miss Beale had made a girls' school anything better than an establishment for the development of frivolity, and their crude and unthinking efforts are supposed to represent the ultimate capacities of women. It is difficult to deal gently with men who experience all the drawbacks of associating with uneducated women, and yet deny to others that real education the want of which caused the inefficiency of the first. Two generations have seen great changes. No one who has compared the fussy and reckless conduct of the ordinary well-meaning woman who throws herself into public affairs, with the calm and systematic application of effort of a woman doctor or a trained teacher, can fail to ascribe the deficiencies of the first not to education, but to the want of it.[1]

Upon this dreary waste of feminine ignorance and incapacity a handful of devoted women and men set to work.[2] Of the details of their schemes

[1] For a survival of the eighteenth-century cant about "learned ladies," see A. Walker's *Woman*, before cited. Some passages are peculiarly obscene.

[2] For the early history of higher education, see *Essays on Women's Work*, by Bessie Rayner Parkes (1865); *Memoir of Anne Jemima Clough*, by B. A. Clough (1897); *Dorothea Beale of Cheltenham*, by Elizabeth Raikes (1908);

it is not necessary to write in this place. It is enough to record one or two leading facts. Queen's College, Harley Street, was founded in 1843 as a training school in connection with the Governesses' Benevolent Institution. The Ladies' College in Bedford Square was established in 1849. On the 16th June, 1858, Dorothea Beale was appointed head-mistress of the Ladies' College at Cheltenham, shortly after Miss Buss had opened her successful school in the North of London. The various Councils of Education which women established, of which the most important was the Northern, developed into the Cambridge Colleges of Newnham and Girton in 1871. In these began the application of science to the mental and physical training of English women.

The subjects of the new tuition included nearly all those which together formed the liberal education of a man. But the mere introduction of the feminine mind to Greek and Latin, science and the higher mathematics, was less important than the new ideals which the new schools and colleges represented. Large concessions were at first made to fashionable prejudices. Maurice opened the school in Harley Street with an apology for the ambitious title of "College," and the opening

The Higher Education of Women, by Emily Davies (1866), and *Thoughts upon Questions Relating to Women*, by the same (1910); *Life of F. D. Maurice* (1884): and articles by A. J. Clough in *Macmillan's Magazine* (1866), and by Dorothea Beale in *Fraser's Magazine* (1866).

lectures were delivered with a diffidence that would have become schoolboys detected in a fault rather than prophets of a new dispensation. The first report of the Ladies' College at Cheltenham contains a pledge to preserve "the modesty and gentleness of the female character," which smacks somewhat of the old school. The religious opinions of Maurice drew the thunderbolts of orthodoxy upon Queen's College. *Punch* satirized the "strong-minded" woman with pen and pencil.[1] Fathers complained that "girls would be turned into boys by studying the same subjects,"[2] and teachers were forced to confine their scientific instruction to physical geography. "This was unobjectionable, as few boys learned geography."[3] But courage grew with experience. Discipline was strengthened, a steady war was waged against "accomplishments," and music and drawing were swept out of the curriculum wherever they interfered with the more important studies.[4] The leaders of the movement differed somewhat in their aims. The men were generally less bold than the women, and Sir Joshua Fitch went so far as to declare that, "If women asked for a system of mixed education, for admission to academic lectures, to the Bar, to the Church, or the Legislature, the reply to such demands would be very simple. We cannot imperil the social

[1] See, for example, the *Almanac* of 1853.
[2] *Dorothea Beale*, 113. [3] *Ibid.*, 124.
[4] See the Report of the Council of the Ladies' College, quoted in *Dorothea Beale*, 111.

order."[1] The women for the most part desired not merely to establish a sound mental discipline, but ultimately to procure the admission of women to all employments on equal terms with men, and in particular to full participation with them in public affairs. Upon the essentials of immediate reform men and women were agreed. English girls were, for the first time, encouraged to pay serious attention to their own intellectual development. Hard thinking was made the first object of their training. They were persuaded to emerge from a condition of enervating dependence upon men, and were taught to rely upon their own opinions. Marriage was no longer treated as a necessity, and women were equipped for earning their own livelihood, if the occasion should arise. To this strengthening of the mind was added regular exercise of the body, and healthy and vigorous activity of both kinds produced a great improvement in the female constitution. Women, in short, were educated not to remain in that situation into which they were born, but to enable them, by their own exertions, to raise themselves to a better. The new principles spread but slowly. As has already been stated, when the Schools Enquiry Commission presented its report, nine schools out of ten were still untouched, and even to-day many women are to be found whose disorderly mental processes testify to the long life of the old abuses. But the work was established upon unshakable foundations, and the zeal and courage

[1] *Victoria Magazine*, II, 447.

of those who laid the first stones has been rewarded by the tributes of an increasing host of imitators.

It was impossible, in the midst of this intellectual activity, for women to overlook the many disabilities which were imposed upon them by law. The leaders of the new movement seldom confined themselves to the work of education. That was indeed the only road along which great progress could be made. But the majority of them looked already for political enfranchisement as a step towards redress of the most striking grievances of women, not one of which had been considered by the Legislature since the beginning of the eighteenth century. Some advance had already taken place. The tragic history of Mrs. Norton led to a demand for the recognition of a mother's right to the custody of her children, and the Infants' Custody Act of 1839 permitted the Lord Chancellor to grant it to her until they were seven years old.[1] Nothing else had been done by Parliament. But political pressure had begun. The sufferings of large numbers of working women drew attention to the question of the property of married women, and the first petition for redress was presented to Parliament in 1855.[2] An agitation began for amending the law which dealt with sexual offences. The influence of

[1] See the *Life of Mrs. Norton*, by Jane Gray Perkins (1909).

[2] The Married Women's Property Acts were not passed until 1870 and 1882.

women in their own cause thus first became effective in the State. But a survey of the reforms, which were one by one obtained, must be preceded by some reference to John Stuart Mill's *Subjection of Women*, the book in which the whole cause of woman was first adequately stated.

During his lifetime Mill enjoyed a great reputation as a thinker. Since his death he has been more universally and more justly placed in the glorious company of those who feel. Pure reason never helped a good cause or hindered a bad. Great reforms are invariably the work of enthusiasts. The only thing which can destroy prejudice is passion, and if the head of the spear is always intellectual, it is always the emotion behind it which gives it driving force. In Mill's early years he was little better than a thinking machine. After his friendship with Mrs. Taylor began, he attained, under her inspiration, to a position of public power and influence such as few men have ever enjoyed. None ever acted from more generous or disinterested motives. If his thoughts reached the community through the sieve of an unusually refined untellect, they sprang originally from an unusually warm heart. It would be as safe to say of him as of any other man, that he never spoke or wrote a word save in the hope of doing good. His *Principles of Political Economy* will soon possess little more than an historical value. His *Logic* has already succumbed to modern science and a new psychology.

His reputation as a metaphysician did not survive the publication of his *Three Essays on Religion*. In this he has suffered the fate of all but a handful of great thinkers. But he left upon the men and women of his time the impression of a certain high magnanimity of soul, the influence of a man who loved liberty as he loved life, who required no inducement to support a cause except its justice, who retained in every controversy in which he engaged the anxious and inquiring spirit of a seeker after truth. His tolerance of obnoxious opinions may be logically, though it was not naturally inconsistent with a very tenacious holding of his own. He was always conscientious without any of that controversial weakness which conscientiousness sometimes produces. He united the diffidence of the sceptic with the persistence of the enthusiast. He was as good an advocate as it was possible for so good a judge to be. The *Subjection of Women* is perhaps the best index of his character. There is no excess of statement. But it is the presentment of a case by a man who has surveyed all the available facts, and has arrived at a conclusion from which he is not to be turned.

Two of the main principles of his philosophy drove Mill irresistibly to the position which he adopted with regard to women. He was aware of the fatal ease with which men are accustomed to accept tradition and prejudice as the product of reason, and was utterly opposed to the *à priori* or intuitional school of thought. He accepted no

prevailing ideas about the natural condition of women. The authority of nature, he knew, was too often invoked to justify the gratification of the baser human passions. Civilization, after all, is nothing but denaturalization, if by nature is meant the blind operation of natural forces. In the second place, Mill was a profound believer in individuality, in the capacity of every human being to be modified almost indefinitely in character by systematic education and development. He preceded the vast revolution in thought which was produced by the publications of Darwin, and he was perhaps inclined to exaggerate the extent to which education could modify inherited characteristics. But in so far as he argued that large improvements could be produced in human character by scientific training, he was only contending for what was obviously true in the case of men; and in so far as he applied his argument to women, his contention has been justified by subsequent experience.

This idea of the individuality of women, which is so strikingly absent from the minds of their opponents, is essential to the understanding of their case. The canting references to the "sphere" of woman, the erection of a particular ideal for all women, irrespective of their widely different characters, the discouragement of all but particular qualities, the exclusion of them from particular occupations, are all evidence of the same state of mind, a complete ignorance of the fact that women are an aggregate of individuals. It is a belated

survival from the eighteenth century, when every human being was born into a certain state of life, there to remain until death. Just as two centuries ago all men and women had been expected to conform to type, so at the present day, when men have " passed from status to contract," women were still required to acquiesce in the conditions which previous generations had contrived for the whole of their sex. This is the meaning of the woman's movement. Some women may be soft, and delicate, and gentle; let them remain so. Others are more robust and vigorous; why should they be compelled to conform to the standard of the first? Every woman, no less than every man, is separated and distinct from any other human being, and as such is to be judged upon her own merits. If she is vigorous, let her take part in vigorous occupations; if most women are more gentle, that is no affair of hers. If she has a keen eye and a steady hand, let her be a surgeon; why should she be repulsed because other women faint at the sight of blood? If she has a logical mind and a good grasp of detail and wishes to be called to the Bar, it is no answer to her request to say that most women are wanting in reason and cannot make a coherent statement of a case. Women demand to be judged as men are judged, separately upon the merits of each one of them, and no longer collectively upon an artificial standard invented by men for the whole sex. In the days of Mill this revolt was not less determined because if the

standard was not one of supernatural morality, it was certainly one of subnatural intelligence.

This was the foundation of one part of Mill's argument. He made no claim to superiority on the part of women. He even admitted the possibility that in many things they were inferior to men. But one thing was clear; they had never, with a few exceptions, had any opportunity of showing themselves either equal or superior. Want of scientific training would probably account for the absence of feminine works of genius. But even if it was proved beyond a doubt that women in the mass were inferior to men in the mass, his argument was not affected. The average standard mattered nothing. If there was one woman in the country who was capable of performing certain duties, she was as much entitled to the opportunity of performing them as if she were a man. So far as opportunities of education and employment were concerned, he demanded that equal merit should have equal opportunity, irrespective of sex, that no post should be closed to a duly qualified woman simply because she was a woman, that the divisions between the occupations of the two sexes should be made vertical and not horizontal, and that in all departments of social activity for which they were individually fitted, members of both should be able to rise to the highest point without being hampered by artificial restrictions of any kind.

A large part of Mill's book naturally consisted of an examination of the condition of a married woman,

which with a few insignificant changes remained what it had been at the end of the seventeenth century. The efficiency of marriage settlements had been strengthened by the invention of the "separate use" combined with the "restraint upon anticipation," [1] but where no settlement existed the wife's property was no more her own than in the year 1700. She had still no control over her children as against her husband. She was still bound to submit herself to him in all things, and the barbarous "restitution of conjugal rights" enabled him by legal process to make her the instrument of his pleasure contrary to her inclinations. If he deserted her or was guilty of cruelty, she might, since 1857, obtain a legal separation. But she was still his wife, and she could not take refuge with any better man. The Divorce Act of 1857, which gave her this partial remedy, allowed him to divorce her for a single act of infidelity; but even if he engaged in a course of systematic and open debauchery, she could get no more complete redress than for his cruelty or desertion. In every case the great expense of legal proceedings made separation impossible, for any

[1] When property was given to trustees for the wife, expressly "for her separate use," the husband could not seize it. But as he might persuade or bully her into handing it over to him, she was restrained from disposing of anything but the income as it accrued. This was an invention of the Courts of Equity toward the end of the eighteenth century. It was based on the assumption that the wife could not protect herself against her husband.

but wealthy people, and so long as she was not protected by an order of the Court, all her disabilities remained.

It was upon the psychology of subjection that Mill laid most emphasis. No man except Burke had ever examined with greater skill the ideas of which political institutions were only the expression, and his analysis of male egoism was as thorough as his analysis of constitutions in his *Representative Government.* He argued that complete equality between the sexes was the only basis of just treatment. Economic and physical superiority would always tend to give the husband an advantage. But civilization, instead of mitigating natural inequalities, had tended hitherto to increase them. The law, instead of protecting the weak against the strong, as in the usual case, here armed the strong against the weak. The wife was directed to submit herself to her husband, and she was bred in the idea that she existed for no better purpose. To most women all roads to economic independence were closed, so that they had no free choice between matrimony on the one hand, and starvation or prostitution on the other. When she married all her property was at once taken from her, and she became dependent on her husband for every luxury, as well as for every necessity of life. Her mind had, in most cases, received no serious development, and she was instructed to take her opinions from his lips without question or demur. It was true that many men were better than both

law and custom, and the individuality of their wives was not repressed. But the test of an institution was not its highest utility. Laws were not made to direct the conduct of good men, but to restrain that of bad men. Every tyrant did not flay his subjects alive, nor did every slave-owner treat his slaves like wild beasts. But those facts were no answer to the argument that the institutions of tyranny and slavery gave every encouragement to the vicious propensities of human nature. To say that there were many good husbands in England was no answer to the argument that the law, as it existed, encouraged male egoism in a thousand ways, and gave opportunity as directly to the ferocity of the most brutal husbands, as to the persistent intellectual tyranny of the more refined. Mill did not suggest that a mere alteration in the law would at once or rapidly elevate women in the opinions of men. But he declared that so long as the law was shaped so as to permit the doing of the worst, by many men the worst would assuredly be done.

This part of the book was chiefly criticized because it contained no statement of the author's opinions on the subject of divorce. If the wife was to have equal rights with the husband, did it not follow that marriage must be made, like any other contract, dissoluble at the will of either party? On this point Mill's judgment was held in suspense. Until there had been experience of the marriage relation as it would exist between

equals, it was impossible to form an opinion.[1] If permanent union should indeed prove to be impossible, Mill would not have hesitated to pronounce for greater freedom of divorce. He would probably have held that greater freedom of choice in the first place would tend to lessen rather than to increase the likelihood of dissolution. No man, indeed, who thinks the new thoughts about women, will turn back from the work, to which he has set his hand because it may result in some modification of the present ideas of marriage. Certain at least it is that everything which tends to increase the dignity and the worth of women, and the respect which is accorded to them by men, will confirm and strengthen the race in its passage from the lower to the higher levels of conduct.

The *Subjection of Women* remains to this day the most important work of its kind, and for some time to come its popularity is likely to increase rather than to diminish. Its influence gradually became as wide as that of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Woman* was restricted. Not only was the case more temperately and more cogently expressed, but society was more responsive to its appeal. Mill was then at the height of his influence, and every word which he wrote was sure to obtain the respect, if not the support, of a large circle of readers. The women who read this book were those upon whom disabilities would press most hardly; some of them were already

[1] See the *Letters of John Stuart Mill* (1910), II, 212.

discontented with their lot, and every improvement in education swelled the ranks of his adherents. The *Subjection of Women* contained little that was new. It announced no astonishing discovery. It was simply a statement, in admirable form, of ideas which already pervaded a small but important section of society. Very few books have ever revolutionized thought. But among those which have directed it, with a new clearness and a new impetus, the *Subjection of Women* must always take a high place.

Since its publication, the whole course of the emancipation of women may be traced in an unbroken line down to the present day. It is marked by a great increase in the number of independent organizations—political, industrial, and social; by a steady improvement in feminine education; by a growing desire among women to enter employments not merely as a means of earning a subsistence, but as a road to spiritual as well as economic independence; by a gradual removal of their special disabilities by the Legislature; by an improvement in the public standard of morality and a refinement of private manners; and by changes in the tone of literature and in social customs.

The advance, slow at first, now almost too rapid for a contemporary to obtain a complete view, has been continuous. Women were allowed to vote at municipal elections in 1869. In 1870 they were made eligible for membership of the new

School Boards. In 1875 they sat for the first time on Boards of Guardians. They were permitted to acquire medical qualifications in 1876. The Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882 protected the earnings and property of wives from the rapacity of their husbands, and a number of statutes have brought legal separation within the reach of those poorer women who most need it. The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 improved the existing means of protection against sexual offences, and raised the age at which a young girl could consent to her own dishonour from thirteen to sixteen years. In 1886 women were permitted to act as guardians to their own children after the father's death. In 1888 they began to vote for County Councils. The right of the husband to the absolute possession of his wife's body received a serious blow in 1891, when the famous Clitheroe case decided that a husband had no right to carry off his wife by force, or to imprison her until she submitted to his wishes.[1] In 1907 they were admitted to membership of County and Borough Councils, and even to the office of Mayor. Every year has seen a larger interest taken by women in national politics. The Primrose League was founded in 1883, and the

[1] *Reg.* v. *Jackson*, Law Reports, 1891, 1 Queen's Bench Division, p. 671. This defeat of male barbarity was regarded by Mrs. Lynn Linton, a prominent opponent of Woman Suffrage, as a triumph for promiscuity and free love, and a deadly blow "at the foundations of social order and morality." See her article in the *Nineteenth Century*, 1891.

Women's Liberal Federation in 1887, and with the growth of their independent political associations the demand for the enfranchisement of women has become more definite and more insistent. In higher education the same development is to be observed. From Ladies' Colleges and Councils of Education the pioneers proceeded in 1869 to found the first of the Colleges at Cambridge. The modern Universities have been liberal almost from the first, in so far as liberalism consists in allowing women to attend classes on equal terms with men. All the Universities now admit women to their examinations, and all except Oxford and Cambridge admit them to their degrees. There has been a steady invasion of the Civil Service, which began in the Post Office under Henry Fawcett, as well as of the ordinary industrial employments, and a series of Acts of Parliament has aimed at improving the conditions of women's labour. Grave defects still exist in the law, and wherever the interests of the two sexes come into conflict, those of men are still almost invariably consulted. But striking as the imcompleteness of reform may be, if there is one feature of the legislation of the last fifty years which is more marked than its attention to economic problems, it is the steady improvement which it has effected in the condition of women.

The change in opinion is marked in a variety of less obvious ways. The whole attitude of fiction towards women has been altered. It would be safe

to say that while the character of a hero remains substantially what it was in the days of Sir Walter Scott, that of a heroine has completely changed. There is hardly a single example in any novel written by a man before the year 1860, in which the principal woman character is not insignificant in both mind and body. Scott himself was successful only in three types: the romantic girl like Diana Vernon, the great lady like Queen Elizabeth, and the humble peasant woman like Jeannie Deans. The essential qualities of these women, though they are real women and in no way unsexed, are simply the good qualities of men; courage and fidelity, dignity and common sense; the qualities of bold riders, of people in authority, of those who rely upon their own exertions. But Scott invariably failed when he attempted to describe an ordinary type in ordinary circumstances. Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, Ainsworth, Lever and their contemporaries were no better, and the Bowdlerized Agnes Copperfield, Laura Pendennis, Mary Thorne and Lucy Dashwood are fit company for Alice Lee and the Bride of Lammermoor. It was not until the day of Meredith, who probably knew more of the feminine character than any other man who ever lived, that there were found in the literature of men heroines who combined the qualities of refinement and strength. Since he made his mark upon his time, English authors have recognized in an increasing degree that the greatness of a woman does not necessarily consist in the meek fulfilment

of the functions of a wife and mother. The greater dignity of feminine types has accompanied a greater understanding of the feminine mind and a greater sympathy with feminine ideas. What Meredith did for fiction, Ibsen did for the drama, and as vast a tract separates *A Doll's House* from *Caste* and *Liberty Hall*, as that which lies between *Diana of the Crossways* and *Pendennis*, or between the *Ballad of Fair Ladies in Revolt* and the *Princess*. Fifty years ago the woman was studied entirely from the point of view of the male characters. At the present day, the author endeavours to insert himself into the personaltiy of his women as well as into that of his men. Woman is described in terms of herself, and no longer in terms of man. The profound modifications of the feminine type in literature cannot be adequately treated here. But in prose and verse, in fiction and the drama, on all sides they are clear to the observant.[1]

Meanwhile, the individuality of woman has asserted itself in the usages of society. Self-reliance begins to take the place of the old dependence upon man. The "old maid" ceases to be contemptible. Marriage comes to be regarded "not as an object to be striven for, but to be received as the supreme grace of fate when the right time and the right person come."[2]

[1] There is a similar contrast between the women, say, of Du Maurier, and the women of John Leech in the pages of *Punch*. Du Maurier's were not a very high type. But they were at least women, and not "dear creatures."

[2] *Dorothea Beale*, 140.

Women, in short, are beginning to exercise a free choice, and no longer to enter upon marriage as a trade, or as a means of acquiring a settlement in life.[1] The age at which they marry steadily increases, and we are within measurable distance of the time when the marriage of a girl under twenty-one years of age will be regarded as little better than prostitution. Reckless and improvident child-bearing grows less common as women set a higher value upon themselves, and refuse to allow a natural function at their expense to be degraded into the mere gratification of animal desire.[2] Saner ideas

[1] Professor Huxley refused to bring up his daughters as "man-traps for the matrimonial market." See his *Life* by Leonard Huxley (1900), I, 212, 417, and his views on the status of women in his *Lay Sermons* (1865). Compare the *Life of Mandell Creighton* (1904), 96 *et seq.*, and the *Letters of Charles Kingsley*, chap. xxiv. Miss Cicely Hamilton's recent *Marriage as a Trade* expresses the new ideas in a rather extreme form. I do not suggest that there were no worthy marriages before 1869, only that the proportion has increased since.

[2] It is impossible to avoid some reference to the limitation of families which is so marked a feature of modern civilization. That limitation is due to a variety of causes, most of which have nothing to do with the subject of this work. In so far as it is due to a selfish desire for luxury, which is at least as common among men as among women, it is wholly bad. But in so far as it proceeds from a reluctance to subject women and their offspring to the dangers of too frequent child-bearing, it appears to me to be a natural and entirely reasonable incident of the emancipation of women. Artificial methods, of course, can only be defended as the lesser of two evils. The matter, indeed, is not simply a matter of child-bearing. What we require is a higher ethic of the sexes. To obtain some idea of

prevail with regard to the occupations of women of all ages. If the interval which separates the schoolroom from the altar is still too often filled by foolish and desultory pursuits, varied by spasmodic interferences in the administration of charity, it is utilized by a large and increasing number for the purpose of advanced studies and serious industry. The woman of middle age, instead of putting on a lace cap and retiring into obscurity, emerges boldly into public life, and becomes a Guardian of the Poor or a City Councillor. Twenty years ago it was the height of impropriety for a woman to ride a bicycle. To-day, even among the classes which is least sensible of the nobler ideas of awakening womanhood, the practice of riding astride in the hunting field becomes more common. Everywhere clothes are adapted to the habits of active and vigorous life, and whatever variations luxury and variety may

the barbarity of existing opinion on the subject, the reader should study the language of Mr. Justice Hawkins in *R. V. Clarence* (Law Reports, 22 Queen's Bench Division, at p. 54). Mill made an unduly low estimate of the force of natural impulse. But there can be no doubt that a higher ideal than the present can be attained, and that progress can be greatly accelerated by the creation of artificial conditions which emphasize the non-sexual qualities of women. Of these, co-education of the sexes is certainly the most important. But they include everything which encourages frank intercourse between men and women in all ordinary pursuits, from politics down to recreation. For some expression of the woman's point of view on this subject, see the recent works of Frances Swiney, *The Awakening of Women* and *The Bar of Isis*, and the medical and physiological works there cited.

display, it is safe to say that so absurd a garment as the crinoline will never again be worn by the great majority of English women. Healthy exercise of mind and body has produced in the middle and upper classes a great increase in size and strength, and a free participation in athletic sports has proved a complete remedy for fainting, hysterics, and the other fashionable ailments of the early nineteenth century. All these changes mean an increase in the independence of women, their determination to rely upon their own opinions, to act in accordance with the dictates of their own reason, and not with those of purely artificial codes of propriety. Women are beginning to think for themselves, to act for themselves, to work for themselves, and to erect their own standard of modesty and good conduct. There has thus been produced a greater frankness in the intercourse of the two sexes. Women may go about in public unattended. They may attend classes in the Universities and even play golf or hockey in company with men. The growth in their self-respect has produced a decline in the empty mockery of compliment. They are no longer insulted by the indecency of bullies nor by the inanity of fops. Conversation tends more and more to be a thing of good sense rather than of banalities, the expression of ideas rather than the concealment of their absence, and matters are honestly discussed between the sexes which our grandfathers, so far as was possible, excluded even from the private

meditations of their women. The intellect, in short, is overcoming sexuality. Women are treated as friends where, forty years ago, they would have been treated merely as potential wives. These alterations in law and custom, crowded as they are into the short space of a single generation, and still confined to a small proportion of men and women, mark the progress of one of the greatest revolutions which the world has ever seen.

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CHAPTER VI

PRACTICAL EGOISM

THE gradual emancipation, of which an account was given in the last chapter, is sometimes twisted into an argument against the enfranchisement of women. It is suggested that women may safely leave their fortunes in the hands of men. They are reminded that men have admitted them to the Universities, to some of the professions, and to some other occupations from which they were once excluded, and that many pressing grievances, including the proprietary disabilities of married women, have been removed. If any other just complaints are made, men will be as ready to comply with them as with the rest. It is indeed true that many grievances have been abolished, in spite of the fact that women have had no direct political power. But those who take an historical view of events know that the deduction from the premise is entirely false. In any case, it would be unsafe to bask in the rays of ancestral benevolence, to suppose that we had done our duty to liberty when we abolished the Slave Trade, and that we had displayed sufficient zeal in the cause of women when we admitted them

to the medical profession. The question for every man is not what has been done in the past, but what, in all goodwill and generosity, is he doing now? But when we examine into the nature of old concessions we can find little satisfaction in them. Not a single disability has ever been removed on the initiative of men. Very few have been removed except in the face of the hostility of men. Every step in advance, in elementary and higher education, in the professions, in the public and private standards of morality, and in marital relations, has been the result of the exertions of women. For factory legislation alone can men claim any credit, and of that the motive has often been economic jealousy rather than benevolence. Every woman who has worked for her sex, during the last fifty years has found among men, here and there, spontaneous help, generally want of sympathy and indifference, and not seldom blind, unreasoning, and clamant hostility. Of that hope deferred which maketh the heart sick such women have tasted in full measure. To claim any credit on behalf of men for such measures as the Married Women's Property Acts is as absurd as to claim credit on behalf of the House of Lords for the first Reform Act, or to claim credit on behalf of a highwayman for surrendering your purse at the moment when the guard of the coach thrusts a blunderbuss into his face. The person who surrenders a monopoly, after defending it with every weapon which prejudice can supply, may be complimented upon his discretion. But it is sheer dis-

honesty for him to pose as a generous enthusiast in the cause of those to whose persistency he has at last given way.

The State did nothing to remove the grievances of women until the time of Mill. Every subsequent amendment in their condition has been the result of special agitation, which has always been begun and for the most part conducted by women. Entrance to the medical profession was secured after a struggle of nearly twenty years. A committee was formed in 1845 for improving the law relating to the protection of women and girls. The Criminal Law Amendment Act, the result of its labours, was not placed on the Statute Book until 1885. The Married Women's Property Act of 1882 was the result of an agitation of nearly thirty years. The repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts occupied seventeen. These measures were so obviously just that delay can only be ascribed to general indifference and neglect. The appointment of women to posts in the Civil Service has been obtained in the face of the same stubborn opposition. Two women were made Factory Inspectors in 1893, after a campaign wellnigh as long as that which procured the passing of the Married Women's Property Acts. Two women who were elected to the London County Council in 1889 were unseated on petition, and the Act removing their disability was not passed until 1907. Amendment in every case has been ungrudging only where there has been no fear of competition; wherever women have asked for equal

opportunities with men, the opposition has been prolonged in proportion to the degree of apprehended encroachment upon male privileges. Perhaps the most significant of all the facts is the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1878. The Divorce Act of 1857 gave a wife the right to obtain a legal separation from her husband if he were guilty of cruelty. The cost of the necessary proceedings made them difficult for the vast majority of the women who lived in London, and impossible for most of those who lived in the provinces. Twenty-one years passed before the price of freedom was brought within the reach of those whose need was greatest. Throughout that period, the average number of aggravated assaults committed by husbands upon wives and recorded in the statistics of crime was little short of 1,500 a year. How many beatings, kickings, and tramplings were endured in silence the statistics do not show. When it is remembered that the poor wretches, whose battered faces, bruised limbs, and hearts weary to death are represented by these barren columns of figures, were legally bound at all times to render to their persecutors the full measure of household service, and to admit them to privileges which no woman should concede save with honour and of her own free will, we obtain some knowledge of the slow grinding of the mills of chivalry. To say that women can safely rely upon the generosity of men to redress their grievances, and to adduce past performance in support of present professions, is to deny historial evidence more clear and more

overwhelming than was ever before employed to support a political argument.

It would have been surprising if emancipation had been actually a free grant from men. Such a thing has hardly ever been known in history as the voluntary gift of freedom by the sovereign to the subject. Concession of this sort can only come from a sympathetic insight and imagination far greater than the ordinary human being possesses. In the case of women, the veil which separates those who monopolize power from those who ask equality, is the veil of sex, more obscure than class, creed, wealth, or colour. Very few of the men who have fought against women during the last fifty years have had any idea of the real wishes or objects of their opponents. Bad men have been interested in maintaining the old conditions. Good men, conscious of their own benevolence, have been unable to understand that those conditions could be irksome. None of them have ever been debarred by law and custom from education, from industry, and from public affairs. Nine-tenths of them have had rather less chance of understanding the needs of women than a member of the peerage had of understanding the needs of a cotton operative in 1832. No person, indeed, is so hard to convince of the value of liberty as he who has always enjoyed it. The expert is here the worst authority. "What can they know of Freedom, who only Freedom know?"

Male hostility has in practice assumed the usual forms of conservatism. Many men have been

frankly brutal and unclean. Others have refused to recognize either past improvement or the necessity of future improvement. But the majority, save where professional or academic monopolies have been threatened, have played the more common part of the posthumous reformer, the man who believes in ancestral revolutions. They have admitted the necessity for past changes, but decline to move further upon the road of progress. Very few people are prepared to defend the character of a bad man who is dead, or to lift up their voices in defence of some great abuse of a previous generation. But it is a different matter when the cause in question is something which immediately affects themselves. Most of us are content to gratify our zeal for liberty at the expense of our ancestors, and our contemporary indignation is generally reserved for foreign peoples. The past is dead, and may be abused with impunity. From the present we expect favours, and it must be treated with indulgence. Every argument which supports the case for the representation of the interests of men as against their governors, supports also the case for the representation of the interests of women as against men. Willingness to abolish one grievance never implies willingness to abolish all grievances. There has been a change in practice, but no change in habit of mind. Each step in advance has thus made little difference to the opponents of women. They admit them to examinations and refuse to give them degrees. They

concede the right to practise medicine and refuse the right to practise law. Deprived of the monopoly of the municipal franchise, they cling to that of the Parliamentary. Reluctantly compelled to acknowledge the woman Alderman, they pour contempt upon the idea of a woman member of the House of Commons. When all the preliminary stages of the conflict have ended in feminine victory, when they are actually taking credit for the concessions which have already been wrung from them, they decline to come to honourable terms with the enemy. They are as strenuous in defence of their last miserable ditch of monopoly as in that of the whole glorious country which lay before it.

The history of three separate controversies shows with sufficient clearness that women have been forced to rely upon their own efforts to procure their own freedom, and that the minds of most men have been not only indifferent, but hostile whenever women have asked not for an indulgence, but a right, not for a concession by a superior, but equality of opportunity to act for themselves. Two of these controversies related to the participation of women in the rewards of intellectual labour. The third concerned the whole question of the relations between the sexes, and the position which women hold in a civilized society. All three were possible only in a country where the majority of men still clung to the eighteenth-century opinion that women were inferior creatures to themselves, and as such

entitled to none of the rights or opportunities which they demanded for free and independent beings. One remarkable fact should be emphasised. The emancipation of women from social conventions, which is described in the last chapter, has been most marked in the middle and upper classes. But the same classes have been the worst enemies of their higher development. They were slow enough to exclude women from menial and degrading occupations. But to this day they exclude them from occupations of the noblest and most intellectual type, and while the origin of the former restrictions was only a tardy benevolence, that of the latter is nothing but a selfish desire to preserve these honourable and remunerative monopolies for themselves. The same people whose false ideals degraded and corrupted women in the past have offered the most strenuous opposition to her improvement in the present.

It was not long before the new women turned their thoughts in the direction of medicine. The art of healing might seem to be intended by nature to be the peculiar property of women. If the qualities of gentleness, sympathy, and pity are indeed to be found in a higher degree in women than in men, then the care of the sick ought to be entrusted to them rather than to the rougher sex. But there are other considerations involved in the controversy about the admission of women to the medical profession. Half the people with whom

its members have to deal are women. However honourable and discreet a medical man may be, it is surely easier for both doctor and patient when both are of the same sex, and the number of women who have endured suffering and death rather than submit themselves to examination by a man is far greater than the ordinary man supposes.[1] Questions of delicacy apart, a woman is in every case more likely than a man to understand the condition of a sick woman. Propriety and common sense alike suggest that there should be a sufficient number of women doctors to look after women patients.

These arguments, which are now the commonplaces of conventional opinion, were no less just fifty years ago than they are to-day. Mary Wollstonecraft had employed them in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and they had been present to the mind of many women for some time before any attempt was made to turn them to practical use. But reason had no more weight in this than in other English controversies. The British peoples are the last in the world to form their opinions by logical processes, and they clung to the male monopoly of medicine with all the tenacity of unreasoning prejudice. Unfortunately, the outworks of the position had already been stormed. Elizabeth Blackwell had taken the degree of Doctor of Medicine at an American University some years before, and when a register of medical practitioners

[1] See the correspondence in the *Manchester Guardian*, 6th, 15th, 17th, and 22nd December, 1909.

was formed under the Regulating Act of 1858 her name was perforce included. In 1865 Elizabeth Garrett had obtained the licence of the Society of Apothecaries. All the medical schools had refused to admit her. Some of her training she obtained by practising as a pupil-midwife, or by acting as a volunteer nurse in hospitals. She had paid a very large amount in fees for special teaching in other subjects. Finally, after overcoming the persistent discouragement of the profession and of society at large, she had obtained the necessary qualification. The constitution of the Society of Apothecaries did not allow the exclusion of any person who had satisfied the ordinary tests, and her opponents gave way, not to reason, but to law. They determined that they would not be caught napping again, and immediately afterwards their constitution was altered so as to exclude all women.

The position was for the time being secured. But the controversy was revived in 1869 by the attempt of Miss Sophia Jex-Blake to obtain a medical degree at Edinburgh University.[1] The affair illustrates so completely the difficulties which women of independent mind encounter to this day that it must be described in some detail. Miss Jex-Blake and her companions asked to be admitted to the medical and surgical schools of the University. Their opponents employed the usual weapons. Their desire for medical instruction was

[1] Miss Jex-Blake was one of the earliest pupils of Queen's College.

treated as a freak of fashion, on the same plane as the crinoline and the chignon. They were told that they were incapable of the prolonged study required at the University, and of the strain of regular professional practice. They were accused of wishing to carry on intrigues with men students, and with doctors, or at the best of trying a new way of getting married. They were informed that the study of anatomy was inconsistent with female delicacy, and that there were certain diseases which it was not proper for them to discuss. To these arguments of laymen there were added the complaints of professional jealousy. It was urged that the profession was already overcrowded, that competition was already so keen that many competent men were unable to earn a decent subsistence, and that the admission of women could only mean the exclusion of men. The women's case in answer was complete. Their own characters were a sufficient rejoinder to obscenity. As far as capacity was concerned, they asked for no special right or privilege. They wished to submit themselves to the same tests as men. If they were unfit, they would be rejected ; if they succeeded, it could only be because they were fit. If they failed in practice, no harm would be done ; but it was unjust to prevent them from making an attempt. The argument from propriety was brushed aside as absurd. The modesty consisted not in the subject, but in the manner of its treatment ; and there could be nothing indecent in the grave and serious discussion of any

natural fact. Besides, if such a discussion was improper, it was improper whether it took place between a lecturer and a pupil or a doctor and a patient. It was therefore the duty of the objectors to hasten rather than to prevent the qualification of women, so that in the future all women might be treated by women doctors and all women students might be trained by competent women. The economic argument amounted merely to the that because some men found it difficult to earn a living, therefore every woman ought to find it impossible. A woman had as much right to earn her living as a man. If she took the place of a man, it could only be because she was more competent, and to exclude her meant retaining an inferior workman when the services of a better were available. Such were the arguments on both sides, and an impartial posterity can only marvel that the opposition prevailed so long.

The University of Edinburgh at first treated Miss Jex-Blake and the four women who accompanied her with considerable liberality. They were admitted to the matriculation examination and were allowed to study the ordinary subjects, provided that they could arrange separate classes for themselves. They were not treated equally with the men students, and no member of the University staff was compelled to give them instruction. But even taking the various obstacles, including the great financial cost, into consideration, the admission of the women at Edinburgh showed

vance in opinion as compared with large. The success, however, was short-lived. The women acted throughout under the directions of Miss Jex-Blake, who did not disguise the fact that she intended to assert rights, and not to accept indulgences. For some months matters proceeded with little friction. But at last one of the women passed an examination in chemistry, which would have entitled her to the Hope Scholarship if she had been a member of the regular class.[1] Being a woman, and therefore excluded from the regular class, she was technically debarred from obtaining the scholarship. But Miss Jex-Blake made the tactical error of demanding that the prize should be awarded to Miss Pechy. The question of the equal treatment of men and women was at once raised in an acute form. The whole city engaged in the controversy, which raged with theological bitterness for more than two years. The women themselves, supported by powerful friends within and without the University, persevered in their attempt to obtain instruction. Every obstacle was thrown in their way; they were the object of every insult. Professors forbade their assistants to deliver lectures to them. The President of the College of Physicians and the President of the College of Surgeons refused to

[1] The Hope Scholarship had been founded by Dr. Hope out of the proceeds of a series of lectures delivered to the fashionable women of Edinburgh. Every penny of the money came from the pockets of women, and was appropriated to the education of men.

present them with prizes which they had won. Ten days before the date of the First Professional Examination they were informed that they would not be admitted, and the notice was only withdrawn twenty-four hours before the examination began. The Medical Faculty refused to grant them their Third Year Matriculation tickets. When the governing body of the Infirmary, after long agitation, at last decided to admit them to the wards, the legality of the vote was disputed, and litigation continued for nearly twelve months. While this was the conduct of grave and responsible people, it was not to be expected that medical students would remain quiet. The undergraduates were not content with scurrility. They persistently insulted the only professor who allowed men and women to compete for the prizes in his class. Sir William Stirling Maxwell, the Lord Rector, who was a supporter of the women, delivered his inaugural address amid perpetual clamour and disorder. Miss Jex-Blake and her companions were more than once attacked in the streets with showers of mud, and the assailants had to be driven off by a bodyguard of Irish students armed with shillelaghs. The authorities of the University had been liberal when liberalism brought little disadvantage upon themselves. But all their courage dissolved when these disturbances began. Men of honour and dignity would have refused to be intimidated. But honour and dignity had less weight with the majority of the governors of Edinburgh University

than vanity, jealousy, and fear. The last quality to be displayed by the academic mind is that of courage in the face of vulgar criticism. Every woman student was excluded from the Medical School. Miss Jex-Blake fell back upon the law. Lord Gifford, in the Court of First Instance, decided that the University were bound to admit her and her companions, by this time nine in number, to both classes and degrees. Had the governing body retained any sense of the things which are worth doing, they would have accepted this defeat. But no one is so resolute as the man who repents of a courageous action. They had been generous once, and they were determined that they would not be generous again. They were jealous of the women, and they were afraid of the men students. They appealed to the higher tribunal, and obtained a reversal of Lord Gifford's judgment. The women were thus excluded from the Medical School and were forced to seek instruction in the Universities of Europe. The whole history of English women can hardly furnish a more remarkable example of academic timidity and the jealousy of sex.[1]

The conquest of the medical profession was only

[1] In this account I have followed the *Sketch of the Foundation and Development of the London School of Medicine for Women*, by Isabel Thorne (1905), and the paper by Dr. E. Hoggan in the *Woman Question in Europe* (1884). Both these women were personally concerned in the dispute. Details are supplied by the *Scotsman* newspaper and the contemporary medical journals.

postponed. The London School of Medicine for Women, staffed by competent instructors of both sexes, was founded in 1874. Two years later an Act of Parliament permitted Universities and other examining bodies to confer medical degrees upon women, and the Irish Colleges and London University at once threw open their doors. But for a long time the opinion of the profession itself remained unchanged. The British Medical Association declared women to be ineligible for membership in 1877. At the International Medical Congress of 1881 women were excluded from all except "the social and ceremonial meetings of the Congress." The Obstetrical Society, of which at least women seem destined by nature to be members, excluded them entirely, and even refused to allow a woman's name to be printed on the title page of a monograph which was the joint work of herself and her husband. But slowly and surely prejudice has been worn down, and even of the strongest opponents of feminism in England, very few suggest that medical women should be deprived of their existing privileges.

The second controversy to be described in this chapter arose out of the foundation of women's colleges in the town of Cambridge. The growing desire for University education led naturally to a desire for University degrees, and the dispute which followed illustrates the complete incapacity of the average man to admit women to any real equality with himself. The request was the in-

evitable result of the admission that women were entitled to be developed to the same pitch as men, and the fact that certain women had in open competition proved that they could attain it. The capacity of women to undertake intellectual labour of an arduous kind was seriously questioned even by some of their earliest friends in the Universities. But the college at Girton was established from the first upon the basis of equality of training and of opportunity, and its founders aimed steadily at the admission of their students to the ordinary examinations and degrees. At Newnham a more gradual development took place.[1] Neither Miss Clough at Newnham nor Miss Davies at Girton made any concealment of their ultimate object. Both colleges advanced in effort and achievement, until the successes of one or two students in the Honours Examinations proved conclusively that difference and inferiority were not synonymous expressions, and that women were capable of intellectual attainments as great as those of the best men students of their day.

The women students began by attending special lectures of an easy kind. They were gradually

[1] *Memoir of A. J. Clough*, chap vi., especially p. [illegible]. Many members of the University were always ready to the women students, helping them both with [illegible] with services, for which last they took little or no remuneration. Of these Henry Sidgwick was the most [illegible]. Among them was Professor A. V. Dicey, [illegible] influence of Mill, but now a conspicuous opponent of Woman Suffrage.

admitted to more important classes by the courtesy of the lecturers. Some examiners permitted them to sit for the Tripos Examinations. In 1881 a memorial, asking for their admission to the examinations for ordinary degrees, was rejected, but the Senate formally admitted them to the Honours Examinations. Another attempt was made in 1897, and the conduct and arguments of the two parties display the principles which were at stake. Oxford and Cambridge were at this time the only Universities in the kingdom which refused to grant degrees to women. The Syndicate which reported in 1881, while admitting that it was desirable to give women both education and certificates of proficiency, said that "the advantages of allowing women to enter the General and Special Examinations for the ordinary B.A. degree are less obvious." It would have surpassed the ingenuity of even more accomplished men to discover any special reasons for the admission of women. The reasons were the same as those for the admission of men. The whole of the women's case rested upon the fact that every argument which could support the claim of a man to a degree supported also that of a woman. It was idle to contend that if they wished for degrees they might go to London or Manchester. The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge enjoyed a reputation which did not depend solely upon the superiority of their teaching. To the ordinary advantages of a University education they added traditions of a kind which few of the

Universities of the world could boast. Their degrees conferred a distinction which was social as well as intellectual, and the people who bore them had an advantage not only in competition for employment, but also in ordinary social intercourse. The dwindling importance of a classical education, and an increasing respect for natural ability as compared with rank, have diminished somewhat this superiority. But to a considerable extent it still exists, and many years must elapse before a peculiar sanctity ceases to hang about these two ancient seats of learning. No member of either University could seriously contend that he did not enjoy a special honour.

The women's demand was not for any extraordinary right or privilege within the University of Cambridge. They did not seek to be invested with any dignity which might give them an advantage in competition with men, either in the schools or in active life. They asked simply for equality, that where a human being had passed a certain test certain results should follow, irrespective of the sex of the competitor; that where a woman had satisfied a board of examiners she should be permitted to describe herself in the same terms as a man in the same position. No serious reasoner could contend that the change would impair the reputation of the University for real learning. Some women had proved that they were capable of equal intellectual attainments with men, and the standard of education had never been lowered by

competition between the sexes. Their opponents could apprehend no injury, economic or political. A degree could give its possessor no power which she did not already derive from her natural faculties, except that it would enable her to obtain a higher reward for her services than she could obtain without it. As the University was then constituted a graduate had some voice in its government. To this the majority of the women were indifferent, and there would have been no serious objection to their express exclusion. For the time being they asked simply for the bestowal of honours for which they were prepared to contend on equal terms. They desired recognition as free individuals in a body of students, and not merely to be admitted as intruders whose presence was a matter of indulgence.

The arguments employed by the other side were those to which the student of feminism is well accustomed. The bulk of academic opinion, like medical opinion thirty years before and political opinion at the present day, did not fight on the ground of apprehended innovations, but on that of male monopoly. The University was a man's University; such it had always been, such it must always remain. From the language which was sometimes employed, an observer, ignorant of the true facts of the case, would suppose that the sole cause of the greatness of Cambridge University was not the excellence of its scholarship, but the

maleness of its constitution. One gentleman reminded his friends that "in dealing with questions of this kind it is necessary to guard against the passionate desire of masculinity which has taken possession of a certain number of women who are seeking to force their way into everything male without, it appears, taking much thought for the interest of institutions. . . . You are in the face of a revolt against the limitations of sex." [1] Man, in short, was made for institutions, and not institutions for man. This argument would be fatal to all progress in everything human. It would have prevented every alteration in every institution, including Catholic Emancipation, the Reform Act of 1832, and the admission of Dissenters to the Universities. It assumes the necessity of preserving a particular character, the maleness of the University, when that necessity is the very matter in dispute.

The question called for much broader treatment than this. The case for the women was founded on the fact that the University was a national institution, and its essence was the contention that an institution which claims national credit and dignity must move with national opinion. Such an institu-

[1] Dr. Goldwin Smith, in the *Times*, 10th May, 1897. The columns of that journal during April and May contain a full statement of both sides of the case. The letter of Professor Westlake, which appeared on the 10th April, is an admirable presentment of the case of the women, and shows a complete understanding of its connection with the other phases of emancipation.

tion could only exist on terms of admitting every member of the nation who had the specific qualities required for membership. A Legislature must be open to all who have the qualities of legislators; an Army to all who have the qualities of soldiers; a University to all who can satisfy its intellectual tests. These qualities are absolute, and neither religion, nor birth, nor sex could detract by one iota from their value. The case of a University graduate was perhaps clearer than that of a legislator or a soldier, because the only test which could be applied was an examination, and not a course of practical experience. It was as grave an injustice to exclude any human being from such a degree on the ground of sex, as it was to exclude such a human being on the ground of birth or religion. The University, indeed, had already destroyed its own case. The exclusion of women from degrees at Cambridge could only be justified by arguments which could justify their exclusion from lectures and examinations. Proficiency in an examination was either a test of intellectual capacity, or it was not. If it was, it was as strong a proof in the case of women as in the case of men. To admit women to examinations, and to refuse them the honours which success conferred upon a man, was an action which no process of reasoning could justify. It could only spring from that same male prejudice which defeated Miss Jex-Blake at Edinburgh, which the subsequent performance of her and her successors had so completely overcome.

The controversy was, on this occasion, more bitter than at any time previously. One eminent member of the University declared that he would have forfeited a year's salary to avoid it. The confidence of the reformers grew steadily, and the apprehension of the conservative party kept pace with it. The conclusion brought nothing but disgrace upon the University. Not content with public and private argument, the opponents of the women incited the students to make demonstrations which recalled the Edinburgh riots. The horseplay of undergraduates is never a very serious matter in itself. But it becomes very serious when it is not only tolerated, but actually encouraged by members of the governing body. Fireworks, rotten eggs, and the other weapons of the mob were employed by the students of an ancient University at the instigation of their governors and instructors. The hearts of many who had pledged themselves to support the women failed when it came to the crisis, and women learnt, not for the first time, that they must not put their trust in professors. The proposal to admit them to degrees was defeated by nearly three to one, and the friends of progress contented themselves with the reflection that if their numbers had been yet smaller the enemy would have followed up their advantage by depriving them even of their existing privileges.[1]

[1] *Memoir of A. J. Clough; Memoir of Henry Sidgwick* (1906); *The Times* and the *Spectator, passim.* A friend of mine was shown a letter from one of the dons, urging a

The opposition which women experienced in the medical profession and in the University of Cambridge is evidence that in the minds of most of the men concerned a woman was still nothing but a member of a class, incapable of individual development, and not deserving any opportunities for asserting herself in any occupation but the management of the household. Every privilege which she obtained—if she obtained any—was to be accepted as a concession by a superior to an inferior, and must not be regarded in any way as admitting her to an equality of value with a man in the social economy. The academic ego flourishes even in those Universities where women are freely admitted to degrees. At Liverpool alone are women precisely upon an equality with men, sitting with them upon the Students' Representative Council and taking an equal part in the regulation of the social life of the University. But in winning these privileges for herself and her fellow-students, Miss Mary Adelaide Broadhurst had to meet and overcome the same difficulties as those which women previously encountered at Edinburgh and Cambridge. Probably every woman, who has done pioneer work of this kind in the Universities, has faced the same resentful bewilderment, the same unreasoning wonder that she should wish for freedom to think and act for herself.

student " to do all in his power to preserve the honour and purity of his University." The instructions were carried out by an attempt to burn a woman in effigy.

Important as these controversies were as an indication of prevailing opinion, the Contagious Diseases Acts struck a far more deadly blow at the status of women than their exclusion either from a profession or from the privileges of a University. These Acts are a horrible subject for any writer, but they so startlingly illustrate the complete incapacity of ordinary men to understand the woman's point of view, that no one who undertakes to write of the emancipation of English women can honestly avoid some reference to them.

In the middle of the nineteenth century the ravages of venereal disease among soldiers and sailors attracted the anxious consideration of statesmen of all parties. Conditions which were sufficiently serious in the case of civilians became highly dangerous to the State, when the men concerned might be required at any moment to undergo the fatigues and hardships of active service. Subsequent experience has completely justified those who argued that the proper remedy for vice was to improve the conditions of service, to vary the monotony of routine, to increase the opportunities of recreation by providing regular and healthy exercise for both mind and body, and to insist so far as possible upon the necessity of chastity and temperance. But the statesmen who were responsible for the Contagious Diseases Acts had little use for theories of this kind. They did not understand the psychology of sexual vice. They did not appreciate the nature of the men with whom they

dealt. Still less did they understand the condition of the women. They were blinded by no ideals, and like all men of affairs who neglect ideals, they made a fatal compromise with evil. They admitted the necessity of vice, and exerted themselves only to make its consequences as light as possible. In doing this they committed two grave offences. They encouraged vice in men, and they inflicted unspeakable degradation upon the whole female sex. That they were deliberately and consciously bad, according to the standards of their time, it would be absurd to suggest. The significance of the Contagious Diseases Acts is increased by the fact that very many of the men who were responsible for them were actuated by good motives. Bad men doubtless voted for the Acts. But not a few of those who believed in them were men and women who saw only the disastrous effects of vice upon men and upon their wives and children, and failed to see the disastrous effects of its regulation upon men and prostitutes. Men of good reputation could only sanction these measures in an age when the bulk of society looked upon vice in men as a venial offence, and when women as a class were held in such light esteem that a definite proportion of them could be allocated by Government to the gratification of sexual passion.[1]

[1] In Circular No. 21, sent on 17th June, 1886, by the Commander-in-Chief in India to Generals in command of the various military districts, Section F runs as follows: "In the Regimental Bazaar it is necessary to have a sufficient

The most important of these Acts were smuggled through Parliament in 1866 and 1869, without the knowledge of important members of the Government, almost without discussion. Their effect may be briefly stated. In certain garrison towns and seaports all common prostitutes were to be compelled to attend an examination by a medical man. The police were empowered to arrest any woman suspected of being such a prostitute, if she refused to submit to the examination of her own free will. If she was found to be suffering from a venereal disease she was to be detained in hospital until she was cured, when she was allowed to return to her vocation. Nothing in the Acts imposed any regulations upon men who might be suffering from the same diseases. Nothing in the Acts provided for the systematic reclamation of the women. Neither in the preamble nor in any section was any object stated except that of curing prostitutes, for the purpose of enabling them to carry on their trade without injury to the men who resorted to them.[1]

The vice of the Acts lay not so much in the fact

number of women; to take care that they are sufficiently attractive; to provide them with proper houses; and above all to insist upon means of ablution always available." In England nothing so bad was done officially as to make officers pander to their own men. But this circular illustrates very clearly the spirit of the whole system.

[1] Some women, a very small proportion of the whole number, were in fact reclaimed by matrons and chaplains. This was of course equally well done in voluntary hospitals It had nothing to do with the principle of the Acts.

that they professed to cure venereal diseases by force as that they dealt with only one of the two classes who were exposed to those diseases. The avowed object of the Acts was to " protect " soldiers and sailors from the consequences of their own indulgences, and for this purpose they interfered with the liberty not of the men who gave way to a natural temptation, but of the women, most of whom engaged in their horrible traffic not out of any predisposition to vice, but out of sheer economic necessity. It is certainly not improper that the State should interfere with individual liberty in order to protect the community at large, and the difference between a dangerous criminal and a person suffering from an infectious disease of an ordinary type is from this point of view only a difference of degree. But the diseases with which these Acts were concerned were not of an ordinary type. They could not be transmitted like small-pox or scarlet fever in the course of the legitimate occupations of daily life. In the vast majority of cases they could only be transmitted by intercourse of a kind which was condemned by the common sense of humanity in all parts of the earth. The cure of a fever patient under a Public Health Act meant that the public were protected in doing what they had a perfect right to do. The cure of a prostitute under the Contagious Diseases Acts meant that the public were protected in doing what no honest man or woman thought that they ought to do. The one process protected the

innocent; the other could only offer security to the guilty.

Of the value of the Acts as a preventive of disease there was at the time of their introduction great dispute, and it was not difficult to produce much statistical evidence in their support.[1] But no man of insight and imagination could have failed to see their moral significance. They went further than the Divorce Act of 1857, and gave as much encouragement to sexual vice as could be given without express statutory sanction. They reversed the whole course of Christian civilization, and permitted men to be as unchaste as they pleased. As the indulgence of their passions exposed them to certain dangers, they were to be protected. For this purpose certain women were to be carefully cleansed and disinfected. Men, and even young lads just drafted into the Army, were informed that if they were only careful to select one of these recognized prostitutes they might be vicious with impunity.

The effect of the Acts upon the unhappy women themselves was as fatal as could have been expected. The compulsory examination may or may not have been an unconstitutional interference with their liberty. It certainly produced disastrous conse-

[1] Even if the Acts had been successful from this point of view, their viciousness would have been no less. But disease has fallen as rapidly since their repeal as ever before. See the leaflet *Three Points*, published by the International Association for the Prevention of State Regulation of Vice, and the statistics there collected.

quences to their character. Many of them were little more than children. Most of them were not irreclaimable. But the Acts destroyed what self-respect the practice of their trade had left. They marched to the examination room in the broad light of day, pursued by the obscene jests of men and often of young children. In order to be able to face the ordeal many of them made themselves drunk. All came out of the examination more hardened and degraded than when they entered it. They regarded themselves as Government servants, and with grotesque and horrible ingenuity described themselves as "Queen's women." All this abomination was done upon women to protect the community against the consequences of the vice of men.

It was not long before womanhood found a champion, and in the campaign which she conducted against the regulation of vice in England and in Europe women of all classes found a new hope and a new inspiration. Honour indeed must be paid to more than one worker in this cause. Particular mention should be made of Mr. James Stansfeld, who sacrificed prospects of great political advancement for its sake. But the leader of all was Josephine Butler. She was the wife of a Liverpool schoolmaster. Her outward appearance would have satisfied even the strongest opponent of the emancipation of women. She was small in body, graceful in movement, and beautiful in countenance. Her voice was low and musical.

Like most of the great women of the world, she was full of the domestic virtues, and none ever excelled her in the performance of the duties of a wife and mother. But this soft exterior, which in the women of her day was too often accompanied by an equal softness of disposition, concealed in her a mighty and indomitable spirit. She sprang from a race of Border warriors. She had been encouraged by her father to strengthen and discipline her mind by study and her body by hard and regular exercise. Birth and education combined to give her a vigour of mental and bodily constitution which could never have been fully employed in the management of a household or a school. She was a devout Christian. But a firm belief in a divine Providence had not weakened her confidence in the power of the human will to alter the conditions of life. She was filled with a profound sense of the dignity of public service, and inspired with that overmastering zeal for liberty and justice which can only be described in terms of fire. She was made for great causes. She had been brought up in the atmosphere of the agitation against slavery, and had drunk deep of the spirit of freedom in the prolonged agony of the struggle for Parliamentary Reform. She had already taken a distinguished part in advancing the education of women. But in her war against the Contagious Diseases Acts she found the task of her life.

It was a task which would have daunted all

but the most courageous. Her greatest enemy was that curious British prudery which regards those who draw attention to the existence of vice with almost as much disapproval as these who practise it.[1] The woman who set herself to speak and write against those Acts put her reputation at hazard. The woman who spoke in public on any political subject would incur no little ridicule, contempt, and loss of character. But the subject upon which Mrs. Butler had to speak was of such a nature that even a man, whose position in society was assured, would hesitate to mention it; and what was difficult for a man was impossible for a woman. But Josephine Butler was not of the type which calculates in terms of self. When it first occurred to her that it was her duty to advocate the repeal of the Acts, she spent some weeks in anxious and prayerful deliberation. She emerged from the ordeal with quickened zeal and a resolute determination to proceed with her task until the end.

The work was not less difficult than she had feared. She was greeted with a storm of invective from her opponents. On more than one occasion she was threatened with personal injury. At the Colchester election in 1870 the brothel keepers made an attempt to drive her from the town. Her hotel was surrounded by the mob, the windows of her room beaten in, and the floor littered with heavy

[1] See, for instance, the protest in the *Lancet* of the 21st May, 1870.

stones. Worse than physical violence was the attitude of men and women of good repute, whose courage was not equal to her demands upon it. Many of her acquaintances deserted her. The great bulk of middle-class England shrank from her as it shrank from the unhappy women whose cause she advocated. The aristocracy and the professional and commercial classes, then the dominant forces in politics, were against her.[1] The bulk of the medical profession openly opposed her. The clergy of the Established Church held coldly aloof. The Quakers, the Unitarians, and the other Nonconformist bodies came over to her one by one.[2] Her strength indeed lay in quarters where opinion was least powerful. From the first the working classes listened to her message with a ready attention. In particular, the workfolk of the North showed that sturdy directness of thought and speech in a matter of great moral principle which has so often restored the failing courage of believers in democracy. They knew something of the strength and dignity of woman.

[1] It is almost amusing to read in the *Fortnightly Review* for 1889, I, 376: "The women of a strong race, in themselves heroines, acknowledge their natural leaders and superiors in men; and the men accept the obedience which they pay back with homage and protection." The writer, Mrs. E. Lynn Linton, was, of course, a Society woman and an Anti-Suffragist.

[2] *Josephine Butler*, by E. W. and L. A. Johnson, p. 302 *et seq.* By 1885, 7,770 Nonconformist clergy and only 4,300 of the Established Church had signed petitions against the Acts. Only one bishop stood by Mrs. Butler.

They were acquainted with the desperate economic conditions which were the chief cause of prostitution. The bulk of the wretched creatures who were affected by the Acts were recruited from among the daughters of their class. They fiercely resented the power which was given to the police of laying hands upon their women. Their moral vision had not been dimmed by luxury, and they allowed no subtle casuistry to blind them to the fact that these Acts imposed a permanent degradation upon unfortunate women for the convenience of vicious men. The campaign of Josephine Butler roused them here and there to intense passion, and an attempt to extend the Acts to the country at large would have produced something like a revolution. The final triumph was delayed. But victory is always in the end to those who refuse to acknowledge the necessity of evil. Courage and conviction were too strong for the defenders of vice, and facts and figures came, as sooner or later they always come, to the aid of moral rules. The statistical proof of the failure of the Acts at last broke down what honest opposition existed in Parliament. The worst feature of the system of regulation, the compulsory examination of the women, was abolished in 1883. The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 gave statutory force to some of the beneficial regulations which had been adopted by the police in their administration of the Acts, and in 1886 the last traces of the obnoxious legislation were removed from the Statute book.

Thus closed the sorriest of all the sorry chapters in the history of Englishwomen.[1]

In this atmosphere the emancipation of women has proceeded. The jealousy of men is less universal and their chivalry more real at the present day than a generation ago. But the male ego still flourishes, and those who seek need not look far for it, even yet. It is indeed hydra-headed, always hampering women in their efforts to work out independent courses, and always endeavouring to thrust them back into those occupations which they can only perform in association with and subordinated to itself. Most conspicuously does it appear in the opposition to Woman Suffrage.

[1] I have derived information about the Contagious Diseases Acts from a variety of sources, including Mrs. Butler's *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade*, and *Josephine Butler*, by E. W. and L. A. Johnson, the debates in Hansard, medical and other journals, various pamphlets, and the evidence before the Royal Commission of 1871 and the Select Committee of the House of Commons of 1882. It is a characteristic example of the universal neglect with which a male Society has treated Mrs. Butler's work, that there is no mention of her in the new *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

CHAPTER VII

WOMAN SUFFRAGE

IT is impossible to draw a line between the question of Woman Suffrage and the other questions affecting women, of which some mention has been made in these pages. For convenience it may be best to study it separately. It is in some respects different from the rest, and its settlement depends in part upon special arguments. But neither historically nor psychologically is it possible to consider the agitation for the Parliamentary franchise apart from the agitation for admission to the medical profession, or for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts. The same root principles are found in all, the same estimate of woman is adopted by the respective sides, the same persons are discovered, broadly speaking, always in the same camp. It is true that numbers of men and women who worked against Miss Jex-Blake or Mrs. Butler have since acquiesced in their victories. But it is no less true that the same motives and the same prejudices exist in an equal degree, both in them and in those who have since joined them in resisting the claim for enfranchisement. Conservatism is never des-

troyed, it is only defeated. It may acquiesce, but it is never converted. Suffragists thus encounter all the old arguments, that they are revolting against the disabilities which nature has imposed upon their sex; that it is their duty to get married, and, being married, to look after their husbands and children; that they are wanting in that physical and mental soundness which is required for the performance of political duties; that the purity of their character will be injured by participation in such sordid affairs as those of legislation and government. It is not suggested here that there are no arguments against Women Suffrage which do not apply peculiarly to that subject, or that, because a woman's right to be a medical practitioner is admitted, her claim to be an elector is therefore prejudged. But no man who has taken part in the agitation for Woman Suffrage has failed to encounter, deeply rooted in the minds of many of his opponents, the same estimate of woman as a mere creature of sex, the same contempt for her other capacities, and the same jealousy of her invasion of fields hitherto monopolised by men, as have been met and overcome by all who have worked for education and employment for sixty years past. With the average man who opposes Woman Suffrage dissimilarity still means degradation. Woman is different from man, and the difference is a difference of inferiority.

By the women who did most to raise the status of their sex in the early stages of emancipation it was

clearly recognized that their cause was one and indivisible. Either women were inferior to men or they were not. If they were not, they had as much right to govern themselves as men had. Believing that a woman, in the sum total of her faculties was the equal of a man, they could only ask for the same social privileges, and in a community where all were equally affected by politics none could be justly excluded. A woman was an individual subject to Government; and if a man was entitled to control the Government to which he was subject she had precisely the same right. The keynote of the emancipation of woman was self-reliance, trust to her own mind for her opinions, to her own exertions for her subsistence. The claim to the Parliamentary vote was an inevitable outcome of this discovery that women were no longer a class, whose fortunes were to be disposed by men as best suited themselves, but a number of individuals capable of asserting themselves in their several ways, according to their own ideas and desires. A woman who had ceased to regard herself as destined merely to obey the dictates of men, could not limit the extent of her self-development. She must either be content to remain in subjection, or she must rise to equality. If she refused one indulgence she must assert all rights. Among the earliest supporters of Woman Suffrage are thus to be found practically all the women who laid the foundation stones of education and employment—Barbara Leigh Smith, Bessie Rayner Parkes, Jessie Boucherett,

Harriet Martineau, Mary Somerville, Emily Davies, Anne Jemima Clough, Dorothea Beale, Susanna Winkworth, Elizabeth Wolstenholm Elmy, Florence Davenport Hill, Florence Nightingale, Josephine Butler, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, Millicent Garrett Fawcett, and Sophia Jex-Blake, as well as those of Lydia Becker and many others who were less intimately concerned in other than political reform.

In the course of their labour in one or other part of the new field these women acquired a conception of their sex as an aggregate. As isolated units secluded in their homes, and wanting that intercourse with people of common interests with themselves, which alone could give a stimulus and direction to their thoughts, women had been helpless in the face of male egoism, and had acquiesced in the spiritual dependence which had been thrust upon them. But all those who first combined for effecting a common purpose, acquired a new sense of solidarity and of power to help themselves. The women who helped Miss Jex-Blake, those who associated with Miss Clough on the Northern Council of Education, those who passed through the hands of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women, those who were allied with Mrs. Josephine Butler against the Contagious Diseases Acts, and those who devoted themselves to the investigation of social problems were inevitably impressed with the idea of their community of interest. They became accustomed to act in concert, and not only did

they acquire special knowledge of particular abuses, but in their repeated conflicts with male indifference or jealousy they learnt that in concerted action lay the only hope of removing their own disabilities. The emancipation of women thus assumed in their eyes a twofold aspect. It meant the realization by each woman of the fact that she was an individual apart from each man, and it meant also the realization by all women of the fact that they were a class apart from all men, with common interests different from and often opposed to those of the other sex.

From this new feeling of solidarity there naturally sprang a desire for the Parliamentary franchise. This desire was not kindled merely by a hope of effecting certain specific reforms, nor by a sense of danger to their own liberties. The protective nature of the franchise was indeed apparent to all of them. The limitations imposed upon their labour by the Factory Acts, the disabilities of married women, the absence of any real legal protection against the traffic in prostitution, the great degradation of the Contagious Diseases Acts—all these impressed upon the new women the risks to which they were constantly exposed so long as the State was controlled exclusively by men. But very few of the pioneer women thought that this mechanical use of a vote was its only use. No woman of any depth of mind could look upon enfranchisement simply as an alteration in constitutional forms. This political agitation, like all others, is, to its more thoughtful leaders,

psychological. Legal disabilities, actual or apprehended, are not responsible either for its origin or its persistence. Like all revolutions, the women's revolution is primarily a thing of mind.

It is recognized by all Suffragists that their legal disabilities are produced by that assumption of their sex inferiority of which some analysis has been attempted in this book, and these legal disabilities are only a part of the whole subjection of which they complain. The position of a woman is closely analogous to that of a person suffering from disfranchisement on religious grounds. The profound discontent of Catholics before the year 1829 was not due to the fact that none of them could ascend the throne, or become Lord Chancellor or sit in the House of Commons. It was the accumulation of their private wrongs which produced their bitterness of heart. By disfranchisement the Catholic was stamped as the inferior of the Protestant, and as such he was exposed to a thousand slights and deprivations, of which his purely political disabilities provided no measure. The fiercest political resentment is aroused not by cruelty, but by contempt, and the cruelty in which, sooner or later, contempt always finds expression, hardly makes the position of the inferior any less tolerable than before. No one who cannot understand the state of a man of sound judgment and good character, who is deprived of a highly important right or privilege by some accident of creed or nationality, can understand that of a Woman Suffragist. The difference between

racial or religious disability and sexual disability is that bound up with the latter there is no little uncleanness. Out of the two first arise unjust taxation, relegation to inferior offices and employments, inadequate payment for services, persecution, and murder. Out of the last arise not only economic oppression, but also a sexual degradation which is often worse than death. Out of all three arise certain vices of character, poisoning all the relations between the dominant and the subject; arrogance, contempt, and jealousy on the one hand, and meanness, hypocrisy, want of courage in thought and action, and all the littlenesses of dependence on the other.

To the early Suffragists and to their successors the Parliamentary franchise has thus been much more than a mere means of influencing Government. It has always appeared as a symbol of social worth. So long as it is enjoyed by men, and by them denied to women, so long must women be in a state of subjection and exposed to innumerable wrongs which are not directly connected with votes. The captain is not more clearly the superior of the soldier whom he commands than is the man that of the woman whose position in society he prescribes. It is useless to declaim upon the equal or superior worth of women, so long as men exercise their power to exclude them from any sphere of activity which they may desire to enter. It is useless, indeed, to declare that they are willing to admit women into everything except politics. The very declaration, even if it

were true, is an assertion of their power and their intention to direct the lives of women not according to the wishes of women themselves, but according to their own. The exclusion from national politics would outweigh all the other privileges. Mere inability to obtain degrees at Cambridge, or to enter the legal profession, or to serve on juries, would be slight things in comparison. But in a country where politics bulk so largely as in England, disfranchisement stamps and brands the disfranchised with an indelible mark of inferiority. The person who, being an adult, is not fit to take part in English politics, will inevitably encounter all the consequences of subjection in education, in professional and industrial employments, and in social intercourse, whenever he or she has to do with those who are invested with all the dignity of citizenship. The disfranchisement of women is thus intimately connected not only with their remaining political and legal disabilities, but also with their inferior training, their narrower outlook upon life and their consequent defects of character, with their inadequate rewards for services, and with their purely sexual grievances of marital subjection and prostitution.

That a general contempt for women exists among the opponents of Woman Suffrage is not only implied in their policy, but is openly expressed in more than one of their arguments. Women are declared by them, or at any rate by such of them as are men, to be wanting in calmness, in fairness, in tenacity, in foresight, and in other qualities,

which are not the qualities of model electors, but simply those of ordinary human beings. Women are by these people assumed to be peculiarly liable to gusts of unreasoning emotion, to be guided more by caprice and sentiment than by common sense and sound judgment, and to give their opinions according to childish preference rather than upon a reasonable examination of conflicting arguments. Sir Edward Clarke declares it to be his opinion that with the ordinary woman "every man is either a dear or a wretch." If this is an expression of opinion, and not merely a controversial gibe, it throws a startling light upon the character of the Anti-Suffragist women, with whom its author is presumably best acquainted. It certainly bears no relation whatever to the character of the average Suffragist. Mrs. Bardell and Miss Tox may be trusted to vote steadily against the enfranchisement of their sex. Not the least interesting feature of the Suffrage agitation is that women, who have no mean idea of their own understanding or of that of women at large, find themselves allied with men who never conceal their contempt for the ordinary feminine mind against others who protest that it is in all essentials the equal of the masculine.[1]

This contemptuous estimate of the intelligence of women is very largely the result of unhappy experience, confined to women of those very classes in which Anti-Suffragists are most numerous. Even

[1] See e.g. Lord Cromer's speech; *Manchester Guardian*, 20th October, 1910.

at this time it is true that many women show little capacity for serious business, and little disposition to take grave and responsible views of their social duties. Such women were produced in large numbers by the conventional education of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and such women are to be found wherever the old ideals are still observed. The daughters of many prosperous parents are still little better than parasites, and they neither desire nor are capable of any serious intellectual effort. But so far as concerns the generality, Mill's contention that the caprice and irresponsibility of women was the product not of sex, but of education, has been completely vindicated by experience. The improvements of the last fifty years enable us to judge pretty accurately of what a woman of average natural powers can do. No man who has had the good fortune to associate with women who have been trained and disciplined, whether by higher education or by employment in healthy industry, can doubt that they are as clear and coherent in their ideas as the ordinary men of their class.

There may be ground for supposing that women have not so much natural genius as men, though the successes of Elizabeth, Maria Theresa, Catherine II, and many other notable sovereigns show that, given suitable training, women may display in the business of government itself genius of the first order. But the qualities of an elector are not the qualities of genius, not even of genius for government. The qualities of an elector are the ordinary

qualities of plain sense and good behaviour; an insight into personal character, with a preference for frankness and sincerity; a sense of justice and fairness; a capacity for balancing one argument against another; a practical knowledge of the conditions with which legislation had to deal. These qualities are to be found in women in precisely the same degree as men, whenever they have had equal opportunities of developing them.[1]

More important than these occasional expressions of contempt is the general depreciation of women which is implied by disfranchisement itself. The best statement of this part of the Suffrage case has been

[1] This argument may be based on the assumption that women, for physiological reasons, are periodically incapable of pursuing a train of rational thought. The assumption seems absurd enough in view of the fact that large numbers of women, including doctors, teachers, actresses, authors, and journalists, are accustomed to carry on exacting mental labour without any derangement of this kind. The theory of the periodical incapacity of women is rejected by all medical women. See the letters in the *Times*, 25th and 26th July and 4th August, 1910, by Dr. Ethel Vaughan Sawyer, Dr. Agnes Savill, and Dr. Elizabeth Garrett-Anderson. Dr. Constance E. Long has furnished me with some carefully compiled statistics which confirm these views. But after the emphatic repudiation by Anti-Suffragist women like Mrs. Humphry Ward of Sir Almroth Wright's notorious pamphlet, it is perhaps unnecessary for a Suffragist to argue this point Mr. C. L. Burt, psychologist to the London County Council, has come to the conclusion, after many careful experiments, that in the higher mental processes there is little difference, if any, between men and women. See his pamphlet *Mental Differences between the Sexes* (Parts I. and II., 1912).

made by Mr. Lewis Harcourt, an Anti-Suffragist. Speaking at the Albert Hall he said: "If you enfranchise women you cannot deprive them of the powers and privileges which accompany it. If they are to share men's political duties they must enjoy his rights, they must be eligible for the Bar, the Bench, for the Civil Service, and for election to Parliament, Once in Parliament you cannot brand them as a class or sex apart, to be deprived of any of the high offices open to men. If they are not to attain these offices, it cannot be by the avowal of sex but by an admission of incapacity."[1] The disfranchisement of women is thus acknowledged to be the main bulwark of the male ego. It disables every one of them in advance and makes it unnecessary to test their individual capacity. So long as it exists, it will be possible for men to manage, not only the political lives of women, but their private lives also; and as soon as it is destroyed, each woman will be able to work out her own life, not according to an arbitrary convention, but according to her natural powers. Her political disability pursues her into the most intimate recesses of her personality. The person who disposes of her politics, disposes also of her occupation, her marital relations, and her thoughts.

This is precisely the ground upon which the friends of liberty have always attacked religious disabilities. Some of Burke's pregnant sentences about the Catholics would apply almost without the change of a letter to the condition of women. "The

[1] 28th Feb., 1911.

taking away of a vote is the taking away the shield which the subject has, not only against the oppression of power, but that worst of all oppressions, the persecution of private society and private manners." To exclude a class from political power "implies a lower and degraded state of citizenship," and its members are in consequence "rivalled, to say the least of the matter, in every laborious and lucrative course of life, while every franchise, every honour, every trust, every place down to the very lowest and least confidential (besides whole professions) is reserved for the master caste." This applied literally to the condition of women thirty years ago, and it applies to it generally at this moment. Every extension of the franchise imports this revision of social values. "Acknowledge," say the women, as the Catholics said before them, "our right to control our own Government, and you will acknowledge our right to control all our lives. But so long as it lies in your power at your pleasure to give and withhold, to impose and remove, to admit and exclude, so long will you be driven, by the necessities of your nature, to dispose of us, in every part of life, as you will, and not as we will." The consciousness of this power of management and disposition always produces in the majority arrogance and egoism. Condescension is always precarious, and it is more rare than tyranny. There is no security except in depriving the governing class of its opportunity for both. Where the equal worth of both classes in the State is acknowledged, it is inevitably followed by

the acknowledgment of their equal worth in all their relations.

The Anti-Suffragists approach the matter from the wrong side. They habitually employ arguments against the enfranchisement of women which were used by English Tories before the Reform Act of 1832 against the enfranchisement of men. They conceive of the State, not as a representation of all the individual members of society, but as something external, which dispenses votes to its subjects as a master allots duties to his servants. "The vote is a function of the State accorded by the State to those classes of citizens who can best use that function for the benefit of the majority of the citizens."[1] But what is this "State" which distributes functions? And who is to judge who can make the best use of them? Why should the State be male rather than female? And why should a man judge what is best for a woman rather than the woman herself? And if a man is to decide for a woman, why not a king for his subjects? The Anti-Suffragist is driven by his own arguments to despotism, or aristocracy, or bureaucracy. He does not understand representative government. Suffragists follow the course which has been that of all civilized peoples since the French Revolution. The State appears to them to be a growth out of its subjects, and not a machine imposed upon them. It is not left to the discretion of any such abstract entity to confer rights. Rights exist inde-

[1] Miss Violet Markham, *Manchester Guardian*, 29th October, 1910. Compare Dicey, p. 33.

pendently of it in every society of human beings. Powers are delegated to the State by the community and not derived from it.

Ethically, a vote may involve duties towards others. Politically, it is a right, which concerns none but the voter. It is not, in essence, a means of governing others, it is a means of controlling the government of one's self. As Burke wrote to Sir Hercules Langrishe more than a century ago: "In our Constitution there has always been a difference made between a franchise and an office, and between the capacity for the one and for the other. Franchises were supposed to belong to the subject, as a subject, and not as a member of the governing party of the State." Incidentally, it is true that each voter influences the government of all other voters, and thus may be said, in a limited sense, to govern others. But short of setting up a separate "government" for each voter—which is simply to replace government by anarchy—there is no method possible by which any individual can be enabled to govern himself without in this sense governing others. Even in remote times, when the functions of the State were few and rarely exercised, it was impossible for a man to control his own life without some system of voting which enabled him at the same time to control the lives of other men. At the present day, when the State not merely imposes taxes, but regulates in a hundred ways the life of the individual, it is far less possible for the individual to protect himself and to

obtain the fullest possible control over his own life, unless he has a vote, with its inevitable incidental power of controlling the lives of others. To make the control of others the principal character of a vote, as the Anti-Suffragists make it, is to make the secondary the primary and the incidental the essential; to convert a weapon of defence into a weapon of offence. The basis of enfranchisement is, and always has been, not power, but interest. It is not the voter's capacity of governing, which is often limited and can never be tested, but his capacity for being governed, which is always infinite, and arises out of his very membership of an organized society.

The argument may be summed up in this way: Women are concerned in politics, in the passive sense, in precisely the same way as men. They are in natural capacity, the equals of the men, whose right to control their own government is the basis of our constitution. They take all the chances of life. They earn their own living, rendering to the community the service which is in their power, either as workers in industry or as mistresses of households. They pay taxes, they are benefited or injured by factory legislation, a change in the fiscal system may increase or diminish their cost of living, a war may directly or indirectly deprive them of their livelihood, and if they are free from the liability to military service, to which a small proportion of men are occasionally subject, they sustain a more frequent, an equally honourable, and an

equally dangerous burden in the performance of their maternal duties, and are more intimately concerned than men in the problems of public health and the protection of child-life. Women, equally with men, are the subjects of government. To deprive them of the power to control government is to invest them with an inferiority which injures their own character no less than that of men. So long as women are disfranchised, and so long as men and women are brought up in the belief that women are not fit to be enfranchised, so long will men tend to treat women with contempt, and so long will women tend to exhibit all the vices of dependence.

This examination of the psychological basis of disfranchisement makes its connection with the non-political disabilities of women at once apparent. It is from the inferior social value with which they are invested, and in the atmosphere of which both sexes are brought up, that all their misfortunes arise. Next to the encouragement of immorality and prostitution, the most important grievances are economic. No one who is learned in the psychology of subjection can fail to see how disfranchisement will affect the rewards of women's labour. A thorough investigation of the subject has not yet been made.[1] But certain facts have been already

[1] The most important works on the economic position of women are Professor Smart's essay in his *Economic Studies*; Mr. Sidney Webb's paper in his *Problems of Modern Industry*; *Women's Work and Wages*, by E. Cadbury, and others; and *Women in the Printing Trades*,

brought to light, and it is highly improbable that further research will do anything to shake the conclusions which have been drawn from them. There is little competition in industry between the sexes, and such as exists is rather competition between skilled and unskilled labour than between men and women. Wherever great physical strength is required, the industry tends to be monopolized by men, and wherever the introduction of machinery makes sheer strength of little value, it is often followed by the substitution of women for men. On the whole, however, this intrusion causes only a gradual displacement of men in the labour market, and those who are thus thrown out of work seem to be absorbed without much difficulty in other occupations. As a rule, men and women do not do the same work in the same trades. They are generally to be found in groups which do not compete with one another, and the old economic jealousy, which inspired no small part of early factory legislation, seems to a great extent to have ceased.[1]

A comparison of the departments which are still

edited by J. Ramsay Macdonald. I have not attempted to deal with the many special problems which affect women in industrial life. That these special problems exist, that legislation may do much to settle them, and that such legislation will be accelerated by the enfranchisement of women, is admitted even by Anti-Suffragists. See, for instance, Dicey, p. 22. One of the most distressing of these problems—that of lodging—involving, as most economic problems of women involve, incest and prostitution even for young children, is well treated in *Where Shall She Live?* by Mary Higgs and E. G. Hayward.

[1] Webb, 75; Cadbury, 131; Macdonald, 43.

monopolized by men with those which are wholly or partly occupied by women reveals two facts: that women are almost invariably paid less than men for the same work, even where their skill is equal or superior, and that in every case the standard of women's wages is lower than that of men's wages. The only important exceptions to this rule are occupations like literature, journalism, the stage, and medicine, where individual skill is always the basis of payment, and the textile industry of Lancashire, where men and women are organized in the same trade unions. In other cases, so great is the disparity that it is almost universally true that the most skilled woman is paid at a lower rate than the most unskilled man. If the wages of men vary between fifteen shillings and sixty shillings a week, those of women vary between five shillings and twenty-five shillings, and there are very few women who earn more than fifteen. The problem is not so much how to raise the wage of a woman to the level of that of a man who does the same work, as how to raise it to the level of that of a man who does work involving the same degree of skill.[1]

Various causes contribute towards this differentiation of reward. The most important are the probability of retirement on marriage, irregularity due to childbirth, insufficiency of combination, the competition of women who have other means of subsistence,[2]

[1] Webb, 78.

[2] These other means include, of course, prostitution. Most employers who pay women less than twelve shillings

the alleged greater frequence of trifling disturbances of health, and the alleged difficulty of finding women suitable for responsible posts. The first two factors it is impossible wholly to eliminate. It is difficult to see how an employer, who has expended time and money on the training of women workers, can pay them the same wages as he would pay a man, when a large proportion of them leave his service at or soon after the time when they attain to full capacity.[1] The deficiency of wage here represents a sort of insurance premium compulsorily levied by the employer upon the whole class of his employees. The other factors, want of organization, want of authority, and irregularity of health, are almost entirely psychological.

a week are making some part of their profits out of this evil. The Co-operative Wholesale Society has recently established 17s. 6d. as the minimum wage for its women employees.

[1] The married woman worker is not always the cause of depression in wages. In many trades she is the best worker and earns more than her unmarried competitors (Cadbury, 128). The whole question of the employment of married women cannot be discussed here. Feminists desire, wherever it is not a matter of physical necessity, to prevent the dismissal of women on marriage. There are some occupations which need not be abandoned, even on account of maternity. It is sheer tyranny on the part of an employer to dismiss a woman on the ground that her place is the home, or that she ought to look after her husband. Economic independence is the first condition of spiritual independence. Where a woman works, and what she does, are the concerns of herself and her husband, and primarily always of herself.

The whole matter, indeed, cannot be settled by the repetition of such expressions as "supply and demand," "the market price of labour," and all the other formulæ of the schools. The root of the inferiority is not the probability of marriage or want of combination. The same conditions prevail not only where the employer trains the workers, but also where they come to him fully equipped. Headmistresses of schools, factory inspectors, sanitary inspectors, clerks from a commercial college, girl messengers in the post office, people for whom the probability of marriage is small, upon whose training the employer expends little or nothing, and who are engaged in occupations where the element of combination has no weight either for men or women, have the same experience as the rest. Mr. Sidney Webb tells us of a case where a Royal Commission on Labour appointed a woman as their secretary. Her work was fully equal to that of a man. But the Treasury cut down the salary attached to the post from forty-two shillings a week to thirty-five shillings, "on the ground that that was enough for a woman." There is no reason for supposing that this spirit is confined to the Treasury. Over and above the actual pecuniary loss which the employer would incur by employing women at the same rate as men, there is something which disposes him to offer them less wages than he would offer men for the same work, and something which disposes them to accept his offer. Taking all things into account

he gets his work done, in the great majority of cases, more cheaply than if he had employed men.[1] The explanation of this net inferiority of wage can only be psychological. It springs directly from the inferiority which attaches to every woman, in a society where she is deemed incapable of managing her own affairs, and consequently of less worth than a member of the other sex. As Mr. Sidney Webb puts it: "Women's inferiority of remuneration for equivalent work is, where it exists, the direct or indirect result to a very large extent of their past subjection." The same idea which encourages the employer to depreciate women tends to make women depreciate themselves, and the reluctance to combine for the purpose of exacting higher wages is directly traceable to the same origin. Anti-Suffragists contend that "no master raises his footman's wages because the manservant happens to be a voter."[2] This is perfectly true. But it has nothing to do with the matter at issue. No one suggests that the raising of wages will follow enfranchisement as an explosion follows the application of a spark. What is the basis of the manservant's wages? It is certainly not competition alone. The master could probably cut them down by one-third without having to go without a servant. In addition to the operation of purely mechanical laws, there is the personal element in the case, that sense of what is fair and proper,

[1] Webb, 63, 67, 79; Cadbury, 134, 138.
[2] Dicey's *Letters to a Friend on Votes for Women*, 39.

which influences the whole class to which the master belongs as well as himself. The master may imagine that the enfranchisement of his servant had nothing to do with the wages which are offered on the one side and accepted on the other. But there can be no doubt that if the man were deprived of the dignity which is involved in his right to vote for his own government, and were reduced to the comparatively despised condition of the eighteenth-century wage-earner, the personal element would be greatly reduced, if not altogether eliminated, and his wages would fall towards the bare competitive level.

Suffragists have no extravagant hopes in the matter. But they have no doubt that the enfranchisement of women will tend to affect the wages of women in the way described. It is the estimate, the social value of the woman, the price which employers are trained to offer and which she is trained to accept in exchange for the labour of her hand and brain, which depresses her wages below the level of equality with those of men. Upon this estimate enfranchisement must work. Certain inevitable consequences of sexual difference will always exist. But in all the many departments where they are of little or no importance, and everywhere so far as they are not important, enfranchisement will produce a gradual improvement. Employers will cease to regard a woman as worth nothing but an inadequate wage, and women will be encouraged by their sense of their own increased

worth to demand higher wages, and to combine when necessary to obtain them. In departments of the Civil Service the vote will enable women to do directly what in other occupations must be done indirectly. But in all an advance will sooner or later be made. In this sense, and in no other, Suffragists contend that the possession of the Parliamentary franchise will improve the economic position of women, and rob it of all its horrible incidents of prostitution, infant mortality, and degeneracy of the race.

The other results to be expected from enfranchisement are of a similar kind. It will complete the work which was begun sixty years ago in the higher education of women. The reforms which it will directly introduce into the structure of society will be unimportant in comparison with the alteration which it will cause in the processes of human thought. It will drive a great sword into the heart of the male ego, and utterly destroy the idea that men must remain for ever the arbiters of the destinies of women. A woman is still, from her birth to her death, in a condition of dependence. She has still constantly before her the knowledge that the regulation of a large part of her affairs must be for ever entrusted to others. What is implied in that knowledge can only be understood by those who in imagination descend into the very cradle itself, and trace the development of a human mind from infancy to maturity, with the half of life shut out from its contemplation. The matured charac-

ter falls short of its full capacity just in so far as the mind is not allowed to survey at will the whole of human affairs, and the restriction is most disastrous when the province from which the mind is excluded is that in which soundness of judgment and a sense of justice, the first of virtues, are most readily developed. If any things are first in the education of a human being, they are the sense of membership of a great community, the belief in the dignity and worth of public service, and the sound knowledge of the great questions agitating mankind in the mass, which can never be acquired otherwise than in a superficial, amateurish, and irresponsible way, unless the man or woman concerned participates directly in affairs of State. The enfranchisement of women will slowly but surely destroy the idea, that they may be completely expressed in terms of sex—an idea which still flourishes in society, with all its inevitable encouragement to feminine frivolity and weakness of mind. So far as concerns their character, the present situation of English women resembles that of men who are subject to the government of a despot. A small proportion take a serious interest in public affairs, and enjoy the great intellectual and moral benefits which are derived from such an interest. The remainder are either perfectly indifferent, or take an active part without any sense of the responsibility which attaches to the exercise of the franchise itself. It is only in exceptional women, as in exceptional men, that there can be

any sound political thought, unless political thought is to be followed by direct political action. It is not in human nature to apply the mind seriously to the consideration of any subject, unless some overt action is to be the result. Upon the enfranchisement of women will follow all the advantages which have followed upon the enfranchisement of men, including an increase of responsibility, a quickened sense of public duty, and a strengthening of the feminine mind and character.

The improvement will not be confined to public matters. The increasing worth and importance of women in the State will gradually remove their inferiority from the national aggregate of thought. As the girl will see no limit set to the activities in which she may legitimately engage, so the boy will be accustomed to regard her as his equal and companion in all their joint interests and occupations. Greater dignity and responsibility on the one hand will be balanced by greater respect and greater understanding on the other. The toleration of sexual vice in men will decrease as men come to recognize the rights of women as equal to their own. The same growth of consideration will take place in the relations of husbands and wives. Wives will no longer be required to check the working of their own intellects in order to avoid a conflict of opinion with their husbands. Husbands will cease to regard wives as mere appendages to themselves, and greater temper-

ance will accompany a more generous deference to intellectual independence. Natural differences will always remain. But within the whole of the vast field which is common to both sexes, there will prevail a more lofty ideal and a more genuine recognition of the common interest of both man and women. No Suffragist anticipates an immediate change. Since 1848 reformers have not thought in terms of revolution. But every Suffragist looks forward to the day when it shall be written of this country as it has already been written of another:

"Equal suffrage has brought, then, practically, no loss and some decided gain, the latter mainly evident in the effect of the possession of the ballot upon women. It has enlarged their interests, quickened their civic consciousness, and developed in many cases ability of a high order which has been of service to the city, the country, and the State. Closely allied to this wider outlook . . . is the development of the spirit of comradeship between the sexes. . . . Equal suffrage is a step in the direction of better citizenship, a more effective use of the ability of women as an integral part of the race, and a closer understanding and comradeship between men and women."[1]

From bondage of body and soul to this higher

[1] Helen Sumner's *Equal Suffrage* (1910), pp. 258–60, a book dealing with the State of Colorado. It has been highly praised by Mrs. Humphry Ward.

and nobler friendship the womanhood of England moves. Those of us who have traced the movement from its beginning see in it not one of those trivial alterations of form which affect the fortunes of a generation or a century, but one of those profound and all-embracing currents of the human mind which re-shape for ever the character of the race. Contemplated by itself, Woman Suffrage may seem no great thing. Studied in connection with all that has gone before, and with all that accompanies its achievement, it is as vast a transformation as the coming of Christianity upon the earth.

CHAPTER VIII

WOMAN SUFFRAGE

THE question of Woman Suffrage first intruded into practical politics in 1865, when John Stuart Mill was elected member for Westminster. The first petition in its favour was presented in 1866. A second, signed by 1,605 women, 'qualified in all respects save that of sex, was presented in the following year, and on the 20th May Mill moved an amendment to the Representation of the People Bill, which was defeated by 196 votes to 73. 'In 1867 it was decided, in the case of *Chorlton v. Lings*, that a woman could not vote for the election of a Member of Parliament because she was a woman.[1] From this time the agitation took definite shape. A small but increasing number of women formed associations, addressed meetings, canvassed Members of Parliament, and prepared petitions. Compared with the exertions

[1] See the Law Reports, Common Pleas Cases, Vol. IV, p. 374. The leading facts of the movement are collected in Helen Blackburn's *Record of Woman Suffrage* (1902), and in Mrs. Fawcett's admirable volume in the People's Books Series.

of the last few years, the labours of the pioneers seem absurdly small. The meetings which have been held every week since the beginning of 1909 have been more than twice as numerous as those which were held in the first six months of 1873.[1] But the early work is to be estimated less by its extent than by its effect upon the popular mind. Every speech which was made by a woman at a public meeting dealt a blow at the whole of the vast edifice of jealousy and sentiment which was based upon the subjection of women. It was not the first time in which women had taken part in politics. They had helped the Anti-Corn Law League, they had discussed social problems at the meetings of different associations, they had even on rare occasions assisted Parliamentary candidates. But all this previous work had been obscure and subordinate generally in the shape of academic discussion, always for the advancement of a cause in which the prime movers were men. In the Suffrage movement they were themselves the most important figures; they were fighting for their own hand, they were expounding opinions which they had formed for themselves. Every clear and reasoned statement of their case was a convincing proof that a woman could do more than absorb the opinions of a husband or a father, and every meeting did something to remove from the minds of men and women the idea that a woman was of

[1] Blackburn, 125. The meetings of 1873 were 100. In July, 1910, they were on the average at least 350 a week.

necessity, and by reason of her sex alone, identified with dependence and servility. More potent, perhaps, even than the work of Dorothea Beale and Emily Davies, the appearance of reasonable and eloquent women on public platforms has established in the minds of the English people the idea of the intellectual freedom of the whole sex.

Lydia Becker and her associates met with all the ridicule, the contempt, and the patronage which their successors encounter at this day, and their supporters in and out of Parliament were few. But persistent effort met with no little indirect success. Every one of the early Suffragists helped to procure the passing of the Married Women's Property Acts, the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, the admission of women to the medical profession and to posts in the Civil Service, and the other legislative and administrative reforms of the last fifty years. Every one of them also helped to draw the attention of Parliament to the crying abuses in the condition of the people, to the state of labour in factories, to the evils of sweated labour, to the wholesale destruction of child life. This is not to say that every Suffragist took a close interest in all these problems, or that they were not assisted by many women who were indifferent and even hostile to Woman Suffrage. But every woman, Suffragist or anti-Suffragist, who at this day finds her opinions upon social questions received with attention and respect, whether by a public meeting

or by a private person, owes no small debt to those women who made the first public demand for the enfranchisement of their sex.

To those who survey the course of British politics since the Revolution, it would seem that the Suffrage movement began at an unfortunate time. In the day of Mill the tide of liberty was almost at the flood, and in spite of the influence of Gladstone it ebbed steadily during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Had the social estimate of woman been at its greatest at the moment when the belief in the goodness of human nature, which is the source of all political liberty, was at its strongest, the enfranchisement of some portion of the sex would not have been delayed beyond the Reform Act of 1884. But the education of men, as well as of women, had begun too late, and as the influence of women grew, the idealism of democracy, with its noble confidence in mankind in the mass and its generous belief in the infinite possibilities of social improvement, steadily decayed. Mill died in 1873, and Macchiavellianism crept back into politics. Democracy, under the combined influence of commercial prosperity, of the pride of great possessions, of the apparent success of public immorality in the work of Bismarck, and of a false and corrupt application of the theory of evolution to human life, showed itself hardly less susceptible than monarchy or aristocracy to the temptations of materialism, with all its subordination of means to ends and its justification of evil by temporary advan-

tages. Popular liberty became unpopular. The cause of Woman Suffrage went the way of Home Rule and the rights of nationalities. After the General Election of 1886 the life went out of the movement. Women devoted themselves to the work of administration, or in the new Women's Liberal Federation and the Ladies' Grand Council of the Primrose League, endeavoured to procure by indirect influence those measures of reform which they had hoped to further by means of the Parliamentary vote. There was a temporary revival at the time of the Liberal victory of 1892, and in 1896 a petition was presented to Parliament, signed by more than a quarter of a million women in all parts of the country. But in spite of this renewal of interest in the cause itself, and in spite of the increasing interference of women in general politics, as speakers, canvassers, and organizers, political drudgery from which few Anti-Suffragists have ever excluded them, the question of Women's Suffrage was hardly regarded as a serious question by the majority of men politicians. At the end of the nineteenth century the political liberties of women were of even less account in the minds of the Legislature of the United Kingdom than those of the Dutch inhabitants of South Africa.

Among women the current of thought set in the opposite direction. There was, indeed, taking place one of those dangerous divergences in opinion which have in all ages produced the most serious conflicts between Governments and their subjects.

While the mind of Parliament tended more and more to neglect domestic affairs and to despise the very principle of self-government, the social and economic forces were moving with increasing velocity towards concentration upon internal problems and a passionate re-assertion of the older doctrines of political freedom. Even before the conclusion of the Boer war, and greatly stimulated by its oppressive burdens and the violent spirit which it engendered, the mass of the population was turning against the theories of the Tory party. Between the termination of the war and the General Election of 1906, this reaction against reaction became increasingly marked. So far as men were concerned, there was a constitutional outlet for the gathering discontent. Had there been no such outlet, the opening years of the twentieth century would have witnessed scenes as terrible as those which took place at the beginning of the nineteenth. For women there was no means of expression save the Press and the platform, which have never been adequate vents for the temper of independence. As political education was less widespread among women than among men, the consequent disorder was confined within comparatively narrow bounds. But disorder of some kind was both natural and inevitable, and it rested entirely with the Government of the day to determine what form it should assume.

The consideration of the state of affairs since 1906 must be deferred to the next chapter. Mean-

while it becomes necessary to analyse the arguments which have from time to time been advanced against Woman Suffrage.[1] Some of them are survivals from the eighteenth century, and have their origin in sex prejudice of an even older date. Others are the product of the later thought of Imperialism, and of these some few spring not so much from a distrust of the representation of women, as from a distrust of representation of any kind.

A perusal of the literature which has been written by the opponents of Woman Suffrage reveals some change of mental attitude since Lydia Becker entered upon her first campaign. Forty years ago the emphasis was sentimental.[2] Women were still too delicate to be exposed to politics; their virtue was of such a tender sort that it could only flourish in seclusion. They were therefore, for the most part, prohibited from taking part in public affairs for their own good. Opposition where it was not merely obscene or frivolous nearly always took the form of a profession of zeal for the real interests of women. "What," asked one

[1] I shall quote in this chapter from Professor Dicey's *Letters to a Friend on Votes for Women*; Heber Hart's *Woman Suffrage*; Arthur C. Gronno's *The Woman M.P.*; George Calderon's *Woman in relation to the State*; Lord Curzon's *Fifteen Good Reasons against the Grant of Female Suffrage*; and Marie Corelli's *Woman or Suffragette*? Mr. Harold Owen's *Woman Adrift* reproduces the same arguments in a more extensive form.

[2] The latest edition of Dr. Gregory's *Legacy* was published in 1877.

indignant journalist, "does voting imply? It implies solicitation and dunning, reproaching, humbugging, and cajoling. Why are respectable women, because they happen to be spinsters or widows, and live in houses of their own, to be exposed to the impertinent intrusion of agents, canvassers, and candidates; to be besieged alternately by the adulation of fools and by the insolence of bullies?"[1] This male anxiety to make out politics to be such a dirty business that no honest woman can enter them is much less common at the present day. Our politics are what we make them, and the virtue which cannot stand exposure of this kind is a poor thing at best. Experience indeed has made sentimentality a feeble weapon for an Anti-Suffragist. The women who engage in politics at the present day have certainly suffered no deterioration in character, and when the Anti-Suffragists publicly approve of the admission of women into Boards of Guardians and City Councils, where corruption is at least as rife as in national politics, it becomes unnecessary to attack the argument from character.

The modern literature of the subject is more scientific and more political. It endeavours to settle the question by reason and by logic, and if its premises are weak and its processes unsound, it is at any rate the literature of serious controversy. It partakes inevitably of the character of general

[1] *Saturday Review*, 21st July, 1866. Compare the *Lancet*, 30th March, 1867.

politics, especially of the politics of the class to which it most appeals. Throughout the whole of it there sounds the note of a crude materialism, the emphasis of brute force as the guiding principle of life, the distrust of the application of moral rules to public conduct, suspicion of the whole principle of representative government, fear of effort to remove existing evils, dread of purposeful attempts to improve the conditions of society. It is from first to last the literature of despair. It expounds the creed of men and women who have neither hope nor faith, the creed of those halting and timorous people of the world who, having themselves attained security, see their belief in the possibility of improvement dwindle in the monstrous shadow of their dread of change. This hypertrophied Toryism, which is nothing but fear of new things as new things, and amounts to the negation of all social progress, divides its arguments into two main classes. The first are sexual, and deal with the indirect effects of enfranchisement upon social relations. The second are political, and deal with its direct effect upon affairs of State.

The sexual arguments are in the direct line of descent from the eighteenth-century arguments against intellectual freedom. They betray the same estimate of a woman as a purely sexual creature, the same inability to separate her from association with a man, the same belief that she must engage in her household duties not of her own free will,

but out of sheer inability to find anything else to do, the same jealousy of her attempting to assert herself as a separate and individual member of society. This sexual attitude is not without its baser side. One writer objects to feminism because it is directed against prostitution, which he regards as a necessary evil.[1] Another says: "We men are all Mormons at heart. We have made the great sacrifice of monogamy, and much must be forgiven us"; and he regrets that a man can no longer compel a woman to be his wife in anything but name.[2] Writers of this type are generally men. The leaders of the women Anti-Suffragists are too sensible of their own worth to lay emphasis upon the lower aspects of sex. But one of their associates has published a book which contains these astonishing passages:—

"The object of woman's existence is not to war with man, or allow man to war with her, but simply to conquer him and hold him in subservience without so much as a threat or a blow. Clever women always do this; clever women have always done it. It is only stupid women who cannot command men. . . . Those who care to make a close psychological study of a brilliant woman's ways—a brilliant woman's power which might have led to victory had she not done what women so often do, namely, lost the mastery over herself and yielded to fear,

[1] Emil Reich, *Woman in all Ages*, II, 247.
[2] Calderon, 17.

should read *Antony and Cleopatra.* . . . Stupid women clamour about their 'rights,' evidently unaware that in the very force of the clamour they are throwing all 'rights' away. The clever woman sits at home—and like a meadow spider spreads a pretty web of rose and gold, spangled with diamond dew. Flies—or men—tumble in by scores—and she holds them all prisoners at her pleasure with a silken strand as fine as a hair. . . . One never sees any pretty women among those who clamour for their rights.[1] And why? Because every pretty woman knows she has every 'right' she can ever want—the right to govern man completely and draw him everywhere after her like a steel filing drawn by a magnet."[2]

The part of Cleopatra has been played more than once since her own time, and always to the ruin of great men and good causes. It was played at Whitehall after the Restoration, and at Versailles before the French Revolution. It is probably played in some political quarters even at this day. If every woman exercised political influence by means of the arts of a kept mistress, we should be perilously near that dissolution of society which Anti-Suffragists predict. It is indeed one of the strongest arguments in favour of Woman Suffrage that it will tend to make every woman directly responsible for the consequences of her

[1] It is not a very important point perhaps; but the statement is certainly untrue.

[2] Corelli, pp. 27, 28, 31, 38.

political acts, and incline her to influence men by reason and argument, and not by playing upon the instinct of sex. The essential differences between men and women cannot be eliminated, and sex must always to some extent affect all their relations. But the whole history of the emancipation of women shows a gradual elevation of their influence from mere sensuality and passion to the higher regions of the intellect. No parade of rose and gold and diamond dew will ever make Cleopatra a worthy model, and Suffragists do not suppose that any of their principal opponents would ever seek to imitate her. Suffragists and Anti-Suffragists alike, women of honour and good sense march steadily away from Cleopatra, and leave her in the fitting company of Barbara Palmer and Madame de Pompadour.

As a rule, the Anti-Suffragists are content to dwell upon the duty of women to be mothers. This argument is the crux of the whole matter, and upon his acceptance or rejection of it must every man be judged. "Political activity," says Lord Curzon, "will tend to take away woman from her proper sphere and highest duty, which is maternity." The argument may mean two very different things. If it means simply that maternity is a highly important duty, that upon the right performance of it depends the whole future of the human race, that it must necessarily occupy much time in the lives of the majority of women, and that anything which tends to prevent women from undertaking it should be publicly as well as pri-

vately discouraged, then not one Suffragist in a thousand would complain. But the argument, in fact, goes much further than thus. The matter is not left to reason, it becomes an affair of compulsion. The emphasis is not laid upon the nobility of motherhood, but upon the necessity of undertaking it. This is the consummation of male egoism. If a man believes a woman to be of equal worth with himself, he must allow her absolute freedom in all things, above all in the choice of the man who is to be her associate for life and the father of her children. If individual liberty is essential in anything it is in such relations as these. The argument against Woman Suffrage is entirely inconsistent with this recognition of the rights of women. By it women are not treated as intelligent beings, of sound judgment and of good intention, freely entering upon the performance of a solemn duty. They are assumed to be people of irrational mind and anti-social habits, who must be coerced into maternity whether they desire it or not, and whether or not they approve of the conditions under which it is to be performed. The argument can have no force apart from this assumption. There are only two alternatives: a low sense of duty in women, or repellent conditions attached to motherhood. No one suggests that women have a low sense of duty. Theirs is certainly no lower than that of men. If this is the case, it is impossible to argue that women will fail to incur the responsibilities of maternity,

except on one supposition, that the conditions of legitimate maternity are repugnant to them.

Stated bluntly, the argument is that every woman ought to bear children. If she has the alternative of taking part in politics, she will tend to refuse to bear children. This is only to say that she will find politics the more attractive occupation of the two. Therefore she must be compelled by law to perform what she thinks is the least attractive duty. The argument is nothing more than the argument for slavery and the press-gang. The obvious course in a free state is to make the desired employment such that it will be as attractive as any of the alternatives. Individuality must be subordinated to some extent to the good of society. But it is to be freely given, not ravished by force. To say that women ought to marry, and to construct the public organization so that they marry not of free choice, but for want of some more agreeable occupation, is to reproduce, in its crudest and most unscientific form, that Socialism of which Anti-Suffragists betray so great an apprehension. It is to abandon, in the case of women, all the arguments which support a free and generous individualism among men. No institution can stand upon such a basis. Enforced marriage is the last resort of those who have lost faith in human nature.

It is undeniably true that the prevailing idea of marriage will be altered by feminism. It must be stripped of its last vestige of service, and become

a partnership. The dislike of marital subjection will certainly increase. No woman, who rightly values her own dignity and worth, will voluntarily submit to a union which involves the sacrifice of her liberty and independence, and in so far as men are inclined to exact the full measure of their present legal rights, women will be inclined to remain unmarried. If the conventional notions about marriage are modified so as to leave the wife both personal and economic independence, so far as they are consistent with the voluntary birth and care of children, neither political nor any other activity will prevent women from marrying and having children. Nature can no more be expelled with a ballot paper than with a pitchfork.

The absurdity of the whole argument becomes more clear when the Anti-Suffragists attempt to compare the state of Rome in the days of its decline with that of England at the beginning of the twentieth century. The fall of Rome has furnished much material for modern political controversy. One ingenious writer ascribes it to the free importation of corn from Egypt, another to malarial fever, a third to the growth of luxury, a fourth to the emancipation of women. There is only one point to be made here. Nothing is in the general case more fatal to sound political argument than a historic parallel. The Anti-Suffragist who compares the condition of society at Rome with society in England overlooks one striking difference. If the liberty of the Roman women meant anything at all, it

meant licence, the abandonment of moral restraint, the offspring of luxury and ignorance. If the feminist movement in England has any character more pronounced than the rest, it is the loftiness of its purpose, the purity of its motive, the emphasis which it lays upon the dignity of motherhood and the solemn duty of women to maintain the purity and vigour of the race.

Here is a passage from Mommsen, quoted in an Anti-Suffrage publication :[1]

"There [in the gaieties of the world of quality] the ladies held absolute sway ; but they were by no means content with this domain which rightfully belonged to them ; they also acted as politicians, appeared in party conferences and took part with their money and their intrigues in the wild coterie-proceedings of the time. Any one who beheld these female statesmen performing upon the stage of Scipio and Cato, and saw at their side the young fop . . . might well have a horror of the unnatural world, in which the sexes seemed as though they wished to change parts."

Is it seriously suggested that this would be an accurate description of modern feminism ? The real parallel is not to be found in the grave and purposeful agitation for Woman Suffrage, but in the scandalous frivolities of the age of Addison and Steele, from which English women as a whole move steadily away. Vice and folly still exist. But they are to be found not among the leaders

[1] Heber Hart, 45.

in education and politics, but among those women of wealth and fashion from whom Suffragists get nothing but scorn and contempt. Indifference to the future of the race is as far from the main stream of feminism as are promiscuity and the erotic novel. That some are licentious is no justification for the servitude of all.

The decline in the birth-rate is to be attributed to many causes, and of these feminism is perhaps the least potent. It is a characteristic piece of male egoism to blame women for what is in great measure the product of economic insecurity, of specialized and prolonged education, of male no less than of female selfishness, and of the vice and incontinence of husbands. It is true that the greater freedom of women will mean later marriage and fewer children. But Anti-Suffragists fail to understand that maternity at its noblest does not consist in the production of a large number of children. Women, at least, recognize that the annual birth of a child is in the vast majority of cases injurious to both parent and offspring, and they will undoubtedly refuse to do what will injure their children no less than themselves. But any decline in the birth-rate which will be thus produced will be accompanied by improvement of other kinds. As the character of the mother is strengthened, the mortality of the children will decrease, and the manner of their education will improve. The population may not grow so rapidly as heretofore, but its quality will be better in each succeeding generation, as the birth of

a child comes to be regarded less as the exercise of a natural function and more as the performance of a solemn public duty. Only those who regard society as a lump of units, a mass of uniform individuals, an aggregate of potential soldiers and mothers of soldiers, can view with dismay a prospect of this kind.

The issue lies, as it has lain for two centuries and more, between egoism and altruism, between those men who think for women and those who allow women to think for themselves, between those who hold that a woman must be confined, willing or unwilling, to the bearing of children, and those who declare that a woman should be permitted, as a man is permitted, to lay out the plan of her own life, to engage freely in any occupation she chooses, to develop her powers of mind and body to their highest pitch, and to bear children, if and when she pleases, as a free woman, and not as a slave in the seraglio of a Turk. Disguise it as they will by professions of regard and consideration, this argument of the Anti-Suffragists is no improvement upon that of the eighteenth-century pamphleteer, who said that "women are given to us for one purpose only, the propagation of human nature." Develop they may, but breed they must.

The folly of the argument lies in its ultimate application. If it is valid at all, it destroys far more than the case for Woman Suffrage. If it be true that participation in politics will distract women from their highest duty to the danger of the State, then

the Anti-Suffragists must devote themselves, as a first step, to the suppression of the Primrose League, the Women's Tariff Reform League, the Women's Aerial League, the Women's Liberal Federation, and all the other political associations which women have formed during the last thirty years for the purpose of assisting men. The argument indeed goes still further. If political activity is dangerous to maternity, every other form of activity which is not purely physical will have the same effect. Anything which occupies the feminine intellect must tend to lessen women's disposition to become mothers. Literature, journalism, science, art, music, the stage, medicine, public work of every sort and description, even the ordinary industrial and commercial employments, must produce the same pernicious results. The most elementary education which raises a woman above the brute level of uncivilized humanity, must stimulate to some extent her powers of thought, and thus divert her from the fulfilment of her sexual functions. Dr. Gregory was right after all.

The argument from maternity is no new argument. It has been used many times during the last two centuries, and it has always failed. If it is to conquer now, we must not be content with excluding women from the Parliamentary franchise. We must turn them out of the City Councils, the Education Committees, and the Board of Guardians. We must strike them off the register of municipal voters. They must write no more books, they must heal no more patients, they must criticize no more exhibitions

of pictures, they must work no longer at the typewriter or the loom. The schools and colleges which stimulate all this disastrous intellectual ferment must be rased to the ground. Girls must be secluded from their birth from all contact with the things which excite thought, until, with all other occupations but that of matrimony closed to them, they become ripe for our twentieth-century harems. We are bound, in short, to reverse the whole current of civilization, and to go back to the beginning of the eighteenth century. The picture is fantastic and absurd. But no man or woman, who honestly opposes Woman Suffrage because it is injurious to maternity, can deny that this represents the ideal state of woman.

A second argument makes an equally frank disclosure of the male ego. This is the contention that the enfranchisement of women will bring dissension into the home.[1] It amounts to nothing more than that, if women are allowed to have opinions of their own, they may disagree with their husbands, and in order to preserve the vanity of the latter their wives must not be allowed to think. The effect of this repression upon the character of the wife is not regarded. At whatever cost to her, the egoism of the husband must be allowed free play. The same argument would apply with equal or greater force to the holding of religious opinions. If there is one form of opinion which is held more tenaciously than any other, it is a

[1] Curzon (2).

religious dogma. But no Anti-Suffragist ever suggests that all girls should be brought up without religious opinions, lest a man of a different faith should wish to marry them when they attained maturity. It is, of course, true that a strong contrast of opinion of any kind is not desirable in a household, though it is by no means impossible even for husband and wife not to disagree "save in opinion." But if women are led to take a greater interest in politics, this strong contrast is not more, but less likely to take place than at present. Exactly the same conditions will arise as have long prevailed with regard to religion. Marriage, in order to be stable at all, must be a union of two persons of similar ideals and tastes in the larger interests of life. This similarity of temperament appears in various forms, of which religious opinion is almost always one. A union between a strong Protestant and a strong Catholic will probably be discordant, because the difference in creed is only evidence of much more profound difference in character. Strong Protestants accordingly seldom marry strong Catholics. Members of each faith seek partners among their associates, and not among strangers. The result is that, in the majority of cases, the tie is stronger by the harmony, not weaker by the discordance of religious opinions. Precisely the same principles are observed by strong politicians of both sexes at the present time, and they will certainly be more widely observed as the political interests of women grow.

Liberals will tend to choose Liberals, Conservatives to choose Conservatives, Socialists to choose Socialists. Danger can only be apprehended by those who regard the sexual element as the most important element in marriages. Common experience shows that it is the most transient and the least trustworthy of all. No union is so discordant as that in which the sexual instinct has played a leading part. When it has ceased to operate, community of interest and community of feeling alone keep the two parties together. To develop in women political ideas as strong and healthy as their religious ideas will make them less likely to yield to unregulated impulse, and more likely to choose their partners with regard to the permanent qualities of the mind. Will those marriages be less harmonious in their later years, which are based not only upon the memory of past emotion, the care of common children, and a common interest in the more trivial pursuits of life, but also upon companionship in the profound and enduring study of public affairs ?

The egoism of this argument becomes more conspicuous when we consider that even in married life there are other persons to be considered besides the husband and the wife. One of the greatest benefits to be expected from the growing interest in public affairs which will follow the enfranchisement of women is the change in the atmosphere in which children will be brought up. For at least ten years the dominating influence in the life of a child is that of its mother. Is it not of inestimable importance

that the mother should be a person of broad views and of extensive knowledge, capable of imparting to sons and daughters information of a more solid kind than that which can be obtained from an acquaintance with nothing but household affairs? Every worker in the cause of woman, from Mary Wollstonecraft to the present day, has emphasized the need of training mothers so that they may train their children. No one can deny that a sense of public duty and a knowledge of the obligations of citizenship are among the essential parts of a good education. A mere academic smattering of politics is nothing. To enable her to give to her children a real training in social qualities, a mother must have every opportunity of developing them in herself; without personal experience and personal responsibility she will do nothing. For this, if for no other reason, the enfranchisement of women, so far from diminishing, will greatly increase the value which at present attaches to the performance of the physical duty of maternity.

Perhaps the most absurd of the sexual arguments is that if women have equal political rights with men, they will be in a worse condition than at present, because all the generous concessions which men make to their weakness will be refused as soon as they have the power to secure benefits for themselves.[1] In view of the double standard of morality and many less deadly manifestations of male egoism, women are daily becoming less credulous

[1] Curzon (11).

in this matter. But if it is assumed that chivalry, where masses of men and women are concerned, does in fact extend beyond things of slight importance, the argument may be thus stated. It is true that some men have always abused their privileges; but the majority of men have always been generous. In spite of the encouragement to brutality which the law has given to their superior strength, they have learned to suppress the worst parts of their nature, and to raise woman to a position which she could never have attained without their aid. So strong has been the good in the majority of men, that it has fixed them in a habit of generosity. So long as they are left to themselves they will persist in this habit. But no sooner is their virtue recognized by law than all the achievements of civilization, all the settled opinions which are now confirmed by custom and by tradition will be destroyed, and vast numbers of men, who require at present no other motive for right action than their own good feeling, will relapse into barbarism as soon as that good feeling is expressed in the clauses of an Act of Parliament. Even if the experience of women doctors, Guardians of the Poor, and State officials had not been convincing evidence of its absurdity, the statement of the argument would be sufficient to refute it. Human nature has never yet acted upon such principles as these. As reasonably might a husband contend that his wife is worse treated after the passing of the Married Women's Property Acts than before.

As reasonably might a lawyer contend that the Acts, which enable a wife to obtain a legal separation if her husband is guilty of cruelty, have stimulated wife-beating. As reasonably might an assembly of churchwardens protest that they are ready to abstain from burglary, so long as it is simply a matter of conscience; but if burglary is to be prohibited by law, even the communion plate itself will not be safe in their custody. The most extravagant political dreamer is not more vain in his imaginings than your hard-headed man of the world laying himself out to defend a prejudice.

A minor argument, which seems to be much respected by both men and women, is that the grant of votes to women settles nothing, and that, if conceded to-morrow, it must be followed by the cry of "Seats in Parliament for women!" "Places in the Cabinet for women!" "Judgeships for women!"[1] As a statement of fact, this is perfectly true. As an argument it has no more weight as against Woman Suffrage than as against the admission of women to University degrees or the medical profession. The employment of it reveals a complete incapacity to distinguish between the nature of the franchise and the nature of the function of a legislator. To one who is able to regard a woman as an individual and not as one of a class, all tarred with the same brush of incapacity, the right of women to these public offices is beyond argument.

[1] Curzon (10); Dicey, 62; Hart, 16.

No Suffragist ever suggests that a woman should be made a Member of Parliament, or a Cabinet Minister, or a Judge, merely because she is a woman. These are offices which entail the performance of special duties, and require special qualities in those who fill them. What Suffragists require is that wherever a woman has displayed those peculiar merits which entitle a man to any one of these posts, she shall not be debarred from it merely because she is a woman. Sex is to be neither a qualification nor a disqualification. Those persons who are fit for office are to be appointed to office. If it is found to be impossible for any woman to fill a particular place, then none but men will be selected. But if a single woman is found who possesses the necessary qualifications in a higher degree than all the available men, then in the interest of the community, as well as in her own, it is necessary that she should receive the honour. No harm can possibly come from concession to this demand, because concession means nothing more than that when a woman has proved that she can render good service to the State, she shall be permitted to render it. If a constituency has the right to choose a representative, it has the right to choose a woman representative. If a litigant has the right to employ an advocate, he has the right to employ a woman advocate. If, after long service in Parliament or the Law Courts, these women have shown themselves capable of filling high political or judicial office, upon what grounds

of reason or public interest can we exclude them? The male ego may, indeed, find consolation in one fact. Though the time which is necessarily occupied with the care of children is less than the ordinary man supposes, it is probably sufficient to debar women except in cases of extraordinary genius, from the highest places in the professions which require persistent and specialized intellectual effort. In medicine, indeed, it seems probable that women will eventually be as numerous as men. But in every other occupation of this type it is unlikely that men will not always be in a majority. As a piece of independent speculation this argument is not without interest. But it has very little to do with Woman Suffrage. So far from enfranchisement being necessarily followed by admission to office, it might be perfectly logical to admit women to office and to exclude them from the franchise. Enfranchisement deals with women as a class; admission to office affects only that section of women who are fit for office. The one is to be considered in the light of peculiar conditions; the other depends upon general principles, which were laid down for ever when women were admitted to the medical profession.

The political arguments against Woman Suffrage are often based upon party interest and expediency. Such are the Conservative argument that women will be Socialistic, and the Radical argument that women will be Tory. The former, perhaps, merits

some consideration, as it is the offspring of a genuine distrust of the character of women. It is urged that " they have not as a sex, or a class, the calmness of temperament or the balance of mind, nor have they the training necessary to qualify them to exercise a weighty judgment in political affairs," and that their political action will be guided by sentiment rather than by reason.[1] Let it be admitted that the difference between the sexes are not merely physical. Women in politics will probably pay a closer attention to domestic affairs than men, they will be more interested in repairing the disorders of society at home than in managing our relations with foreign peoples. Attention to the mechanics of public health, social warfare against disease, improvement of housing conditions, schemes for garden cities, attempts to prevent or to mitigate the abuses of economic privileges, and the protection of childhood from ignorance, sickness, and neglect—all these public activities mark an increasing sense in men of the importance of those objects which are alleged to be the peculiar sphere of woman. The feminization of democracy, proceeds. The mere empty cry of " Socialism," which is so often on the lips of Anti-Suffragists, will not check a spirit of social reform which now pervades all parties in the State. Two things are pretty clear in the matter. The first is that these social improvements have not been undertaken in any tempest of unreasoning emotion.

[1] Curzon (4), (7); Dicey, 53, 60, 82.

The working-class voters who are responsible for them are better than a mere mob. Collectivism may be right, or it may be wrong. But it is the height of absurdity to describe as reckless or sentimental legislation which has been authorized and ratified by the majority of the workmen of Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Scotland, a class among whom reason and plain good sense are as highly developed as in any class of men in any part of the world. Personal contact with people of this type does much to steady the nerves of those who dread democracy. It is no bad thing for a Tory controversialist to spend a few weeks out of each year in Manchester. The second observation which should be made here is that which has been made before in these pages, that rashness and want of judgment are not the qualities of women. The contemptuous estimate of women to which reference has been made in the preceding chapter is only just when applied to women who are ignorant. Women who are trained and disciplined are no more likely than men to plunge without reflection into the whirlpool of reform. George Meredith, who knew more of women than all the Anti-Suffragists put together, once wrote: "We pay this homage to the settled common sense of woman. Distinctly does she discountenance leaps in the dark, wild driving, and freaks of Radicalism." The British peoples have never been as dried grass to the flame of change, and the instinct of women in particular is always to pre-

serve rather than to destroy. They are not conservative, but preservative. The majority of English women will no doubt be as ready as the majority of English men for the practice of true Conservatism, which is not inconsistent with the preservation of the good in life, because it undertakes a steady and conscientious elimination of the bad.

Another political argument is that the enfranchisement of women will weaken our hold upon India.[1] The inhabitants of that country, being now compelled to acquiesce in our rule so long as it is exercised by the representatives of men, will resent it as soon as their governors are known to be the nominees of women. For this statement not an iota of evidence has ever been produced; it is simply a matter of bare assertion. What facts we have are all on the other side. The people of India have been governed by female sovereigns as often as any in the world. They made no protest against government by the East India Company, some of whose shareholders were women. This argument may be an attempt to utilize the present discontent in India. So far as that discontent exists, it is among a new educated class which is filled with the new wine of Mill, and seems to have imbibed the emancipation of women with the rest.[2]

[1] Curzon, 9; Dicey, 35; Heber Hart, 36.

[2] So, at least, I have been informed by the late Romesh Chunder Dutt and Lala Lajpat Rai, representatives of the New Indian reformers.

The other classes are bound to us by ties of self-interest which show no signs of weakening. For the vast majority, indeed, government is simply a District Commissioner or the Chief Officer of Police. The very nature of the franchise is probably beyond their comprehension, and when once they understand it, it is more than likely that our rule will come to an end, whether the votes which support it are those of men or those of women. A people which can appreciate representative government will direct its speculations to its own affairs, without reference to the domestic concerns of its foreign conquerors. The democracy of the United Kingdom never has governed India, does not govern it now, and, it is to be hoped, never will govern it. Our government of India must for many years be despotic, and it can only stand if it is exercised with a detailed knowledge and sympathy with native feeling, of which the vast majority of our electors are by force of circumstances incapable. We can never do more than choose the most benevolent despot whom we can find. The system is bad, but so long as we hold India it is the best which can be devised. It will not be affected one way or another by the gradual admission of women to the franchise.

But the thing goes much deeper than the possibility of disturbances in India. We are here faced with another manifestation of the danger in which foreign Empire involves domestic liberty. There is no worse enemy of free government than a great

proconsul. It is psychologically impossible, in the ordinary case, for a man who has spent his life in administering the affairs of a foreign people, without being directly responsible to them, to work comfortably with representative institutions. Champions of liberty in this country, from the days of Burke and Fox to the present, have never failed to warn its inhabitants of this peril. No evidence is, in fact, produced in support of this argument against Woman Suffrage. But even if the evidence were substantial, it could make no difference to those who on other grounds were favourable to the cause. If it be indeed true that the price of Empire is the subordination of woman, then the British Empire in India must go.

Let us clear our minds upon the matter. For what purposes does a State exist? For the benefit of the persons within it? or to express in the presence of other States the ideals of a certain section only of those persons? If the British Constitution is to be so constructed that the particular views of Lord Curzon and the Anti-Suffragists may be enforced upon Germany and India, then by all means let us surrender the regulation of all our affairs, domestic and foreign—for the two cannot be separated—into their hands. But if, as all socially minded people must believe, a State exists for the benefit of those who are directly subject to it, and live their lives under the conditions which it imposes, then the opinions of every one of them must be expressed in the organization

of the State, without any reference to its relations to external powers. Lord Curzon, in employing this argument, is merely repeating those arguments which he used so often at the General Election of January, 1910. No one can study his public utterances without coming to the conclusion that the only State organization of which he could conscientiously approve would leave little room for the representation of anybody but himself. Wiser men and women, albeit with no extravagant hopes, accept the representation of all as the only safe foundation. In the settlement of the Constitution of the United Kingdom the first interests and the only interests to be consulted are those of the inhabitants of these islands. We have to choose, it would appear, between the loss of India and the subjection of English women. Those who believe that it is our duty to maintain, at whatever cost to ourselves, external pomp and dignity, will choose to retain India. But no serious thinker, whose mental vision can traverse the whole prospect of the inferiority of women and its consequences, from the trifling grievances of convention to the abysmal degradations of sweated labour and prostitution, will hesitate, if the choice be offered him, to pronounce for immediate evacuation. If it is of vital importance to English women that they should have full political rights, then the first duty of an English Government is to look to their interests. The liberties of a people are not to be regulated by the necessities of its dependants.

The greatest weight is attached by Anti-Suffragists to the argument that government is based on physical force, that a vote is merely the expression of an intention to enforce the opinion of the voter by violence, that a minority ultimately yields to a majority only because it knows that it would be beaten in a civil war, that women are not physically capable of enforcing their opinions in this way, and that, therefore, they are not entitled to have votes.[1] The extent to which legal pedantry has pushed the truth which underlies this argument causes the Anti-Suffragists to wallow in a very Serbonian bog of false politics and false reasoning. It is perfectly true that a certain amount of physical force is necessary in any organized society for the purpose of restraining those who would otherwise disorganize it. Police are required to prevent offences against persons and against property. But the police alone are nothing. Behind the police is the force of public opinion. They have authority, derived from the settled conviction of nine citizens out of ten, that certain rules must be obeyed by all. The vast majority observe the law because it is their own law; not because they fear punishment for its

[1] Dicey, 66; Curzon (13); Hart, 23. It is significant that this argument is entirely modern. It had obviously no application at the beginning of the Suffrage movement, when the majority of the male inhabitants of the country were still disfranchised. It is not mentioned even in the fourth edition of Mr. Sidney Buxton's *Political Questions of the Day*, which was published in 1884. Old prejudices never want for new arguments to defend them.

breach, but because they acknowledge its justice. On many topics there is difference of opinion, and on not a few the will of a well-organized and intelligent minority may successfully, and for long periods of time, impose its will upon a majority. On the great essentials, however, all except a small minority are united. For the coercion of that minority force is required, and the majority accordingly call that force into existence.

How can the enfranchisement of women do anything to weaken the application of this force? The more responsible Anti-Suffragists are very cautious in drawing their conclusions. But one of their associates states his argument in this amazing form: "The giving of votes to women would introduce into the foundation on which our Constitution is built a false quantity and a weakness of such a nature as to render our Government unstable, and the lives, liberties, and property of the citizens of this country insecure."[1] This is the very false gallop of political controversy. The argument is that women have not themselves sufficient physical strength to enforce laws, and therefore, if they are enfranchised, laws will be less strictly enforced than at present. Nothing is taken away from the existing sanctions. Those who already make life,

[1] Gronno, p. 15. The statement is so extravagant that I should not have considered it seriously but for the importance of its author. His pamphlet is published for the Manchester Branch of the Women's National Anti-Suffrage League, and the passage quoted above is printed in heavy type.

liberty, and property secure by the weight which they give to the protecting laws are not to be deprived of a jot of their powers and privileges, but by some mysterious process their influence is to be seriously reduced. Is it suggested, as a matter of fact, that women are less anxious to preserve life, liberty, or property than men are? Is it seriously contended that the enfranchisement of women will encourage murder, false imprisonment, and burglary? Does Mr. Gronno or any other Anti-Suffragist believe, in particular, that these crimes are more common in Australia, New Zealand, or Norway, where women have votes, than in the United Kingdom, where they have not? There is nothing in all their literature which suggests such a foolish proposition. This disposes of nine-tenths of their argument. There is already sufficient force to maintain order. Nothing is taken away from it, and the weight of additional opinion is added to it for what it is worth. So far as the fundamental things of society are concerned, the laws will be enforced as thoroughly as at present, in spite of the enfranchisement of women.

This argument, however, is generally taken a step further. The real basis of it is a suspicion that upon some highly controversial subjects men and women may be opposed to one another, that a majority, chiefly composed of women, will endeavour to coerce a minority, chiefly composed of men, and that law and physical force being thus brought into conflict some terrible disaster will

ensue. In this particular dispute Suffragists have at least the more hopeful side. If their opponents are justified in their apprehension, then the dissolution of society is only a matter of time, whether women are enfranchised or not. Nothing in the argument can apply to politics which does not apply to the relations of men and women apart from politics. No such political crisis could occur except as the consequence of some spiritual crisis, which must take place as soon as women are able to think clearly and definitely for themselves. When the sexes come to the conclusion that their interests are diametrically opposed to one another, and that the decisive factor is to be the physical strength of men, then it has already ceased to be a question of votes or no votes. We have then come to the end of civilization, and we may as well hang millstones about our necks and cast ourselves into the sea as attempt by the mere disfranchisement of women to preserve the existing order. All this will happen whether women are enfranchised or not. If it be true that an intelligent woman can ever find her condition so intolerable that only physical strength will force her to remain in it, then not only the home, but the whole structure of society is for ever rent and destroyed. The only way of salvation is to revert to the estimate of woman as a slave and a chattel, to degrade her once more into a sexual drudge, and by every means in our power to prevent her from having opinions of her own.

This belief in physical force as the beginning and the end of politics can only exist in the minds of people who regard society as an aggregation of animosities. It is always reassuring to leave the study and to acquire some knowledge of democracy at first hand. Personal experience of the mental processes of ordinary practical men is the best remedy for the timidity of professors. The dominating influence in politics is not force, which is always disruptive, but unity of interest, which is indeed the only thing which holds society together. If a sense of their common interest were not the first thing in the minds of the majority of a people, they must inevitably split into innumerable mobs or gangs, and central Government would come to an end as soon as it was established. Whatever may have been the case in the Middle Ages, in a modern State the acquiescence of an individual in the expressed wishes of Government, so long as that Government represents the whole community with substantial fairness, arises out of a sense of social justice, the knowledge that society, to exist at all, must be an affair of compromise, where individuals must subordinate themselves to the good of the whole. In the case of ninety-nine electors out of a hundred their compliance with the law is not submission to the tyranny of a conqueror, but a recognition of the fact that others, having equal claims with themselves to the consideration of Government, are the more numerous body, and an acceptance of their opinions as repre-

senting for the time being the nearest possible approach to social unanimity.

It is undoubtedly true that, in certain states of society, wanton and persistent tyranny may overcome even this wellnigh invincible attachment to law and order. The essential conditions of such an outbreak are an injury which threatens some vital interest of those who rebel, and the absence of any other means than force to prevent it. The maintenance of order being necessary for the conduct of their ordinary business, men do not take to arms unless they are convinced that such a desperate remedy is the least of all the possible evils. Such conditions can only exist in States where the Government and the subjects are of widely different characters. It is impossible to imagine, in the case of the United Kingdom, a majority of men setting out to impose such intolerable burdens upon their fellows, to whom they are bound by all the ties of blood, of language, of religion, of business, and of social intercourse, as to provoke any worse spirit than a determination to repeal the obnoxious law in the next Parliament, accompanied, it may be, by some degree of passive resistance in the meantime. Nor is it possible to imagine such deliberate wickedness being displayed by men towards women or by women towards men. Even the worst abuses from which women have suffered at the hands of men have been, in the majority of minds, merely the product of unimaginative egoism rather than

of malice, and as the sense of justice slowly overcomes prejudice and self-interest, the wrongs are one by one redressed. A survey of the present condition of society does not reveal a single problem upon which such a degree of sexual antagonism should be roused that men as a class would wilfully turn from the path of civilization and compel women to submit to treatment which they would not voluntarily undergo. Crass stupidity there always has been, and always will be. But crass stupidity, however reluctantly, can always be brought to reason.

The British peoples, like all others, do not think in sexes. The broad divisions are nearly always national, religious, or economic. On points of detail, women as a class may differ from men as a class. But as a rule they will be divided on fundamental principles as men are divided at present. The wide differences which exist among them on the question of their own enfranchisement, as well as the experience of foreign countries, tend to confirm this supposition. The only matters upon which it is specifically alleged that this fatal conflict may arise are war, the liquor trade, and the public treatment of sexual vice. Upon two of these it is already possible to pronounce judgment. A disposition to oppose war and a disposition to suppress the liquor trade have been marked features of modern politics. There never has been, in either case, any sign of a divergence of the sexes. Women would seem, on the whole, to incline against both war and drunkenness, and

the growth of their influence will no doubt indirectly as well as directly tend towards the prevention of both. But there is not the slightest ground for the suggestion that substantially all women ever have been, or ever will be, opposed to substantially all men upon either one question or the other.

In the case of sexual vice it is assumed by Anti-Suffragists that women will compel the Government to impose penalties upon men, and that in this they will be opposed by substantially all the men in the country. It may be remarked in passing that this is in itself a damning admission. It amounts to an acknowledgment that the existing laws are such as women would not tolerate if they had the power to alter them. What becomes of the argument that the indirect influence of women enables them to do all that they could do directly? And where is chivalry? The whole case rests upon the wildest speculation. Many men may indulge in vice; but the majority of them are certainly of opinion that it is an evil in itself. Can it be seriously suggested that men would use force to compel women to submit to a wrong which they themselves admit to be a wrong? It is at any rate certain that when men have reached this stage of thought it will not be necessary for them to proceed to action. Society will already be at an end. The utmost limit to which reason can push this argument is that a particular statute may become a dead letter. But the argument is directed against a chimæra, and can only proceed from minds which suppose that women will

legislate wildly and recklessly, and without regard to practical convenience and expediency. Women go deeper into the heart of the abuse. New legislation will certainly be directed against it. They will conduct a more vigorous campaign against the White Slave Traffic. They will amend and enforce more strictly the laws against disorderly houses, and against the procuring of girls and women. They will make public solicitation a crime in both sexes, or in neither. They will raise the age of consent. They will make adultery in a husband as grave a legal offence as adultery in a wife. They may make seduction a crime as well as a civil wrong, and they may make it a crime for a husband to infect his wife with a venereal disease. They may appoint a commission of women to reclaim prostitutes. Much will be done by economic progress. Suffragists intend to raise the pay of women in the employ of Government. They intend to open to women occupations which are at present closed, and so to relieve the pressure upon those which they are already permitted to enter. They believe that enfranchisement will invest women with greater influence in the labour market, and strengthen their powers of combination. But when mechanical changes of this kind have done their utmost, it is to alterations in opinion that women will look for great improvement. They trust that when women are admitted to equal honours and dignities with men, it will gradually cease to be a venial offence in a man to use a woman for his

pleasure and then leave her in the street to rot. One thing is certain; a Puritan Inquisition exists only in the imagination of Anti-Suffragists.

It is, of course, possible that women will oppose men on some question of great importance, just as it is possible that the King will refuse to assent to a Bill, or the House of Commons appropriate at a moment's notice all the estates and investments of the wealthy classes. But the British peoples abide in a comfortable security that these things will not happen. Some risks are so small that they do not enter into political calculations. The argument from physical force is based entirely upon a risk of this kind. It is at once the most pretentious and the most worthless of all the arguments against Woman Suffrage. Whether it springs from a pedantic fear for the foundations of law and order, or from a base and unworthy apprehension of an attempt to check male debauchery, it is supported by assumptions which, at the best, are the remotest of possibilities. Political institutions, after all, are based upon things more solid and more robust than these. The statesman who calculates upon remote possibilities dies in despair. If he is never to act upon general principles and to place some trust in human nature, he will not find safety in any part of the fabric of the State. A constitution cannot be based upon a potentiality in the seventh degree. Its makers must leave something to the good sense of their posterity.

No attempt has been made in the preceding pages to deal with all the arguments which have been advanced against the enfranchisement of women. Those who enjoy controversy for its own sake may wrestle with the bogies that a man who is engaged in business has time to take part in politics, but a woman who manages a house has not; that enfranchisement will corrupt the morals of women; that Germany will invade us if we give women votes; that all men are to have votes because some men risk their lives as miners or as soldiers, while women, many of whom only risk their lives as mothers, are not entitled to equal privileges. The object of this and the preceding chapter has been rather to show the connection between the opposition to Woman Suffrage and the opposition to the emancipation of women as a whole. The "physical force" argument may prevail in the debating societies of Cloudcuckootown. Other arguments rest upon a distrust of popular liberties of every kind. But the basis of the whole case is the old sexual conception of woman, the exaggeration of her maternal functions from a duty which she may freely and honourably undertake into a duty which she must be compelled to perform even against her will, and that contempt for her intellectual power and her freedom of thought and action which has produced her saddest humiliations. There can be no halting by the way. Those whom we permit to think for themselves will sooner or later seek also to act for themselves. We must either go on or go back, to complete freedom or to complete subjection.

CHAPTER IX

WOMAN SUFFRAGE SINCE 1906

IT is impossible at the present time for any man or woman to write an accurate account of the progress of Woman Suffrage during the last six years. But there may be some value in a record of the impressions of one who has had unusually good opportunities of forming an unbiassed judgment. While every statement in this chapter is influenced by the writer's personal acquaintance with Suffragists of all sorts, his adherence to the present Liberal Government is some evidence of his capacity to see two sides of the question, and not to cast himself in the spirit of a partisan violently against either. He has certainly not reached his present opinions about the conduct of the Government without overcoming that very strong disposition to the contrary which springs from his agreement with their general policy and his constant association with members of their party.

The new Suffrage movement, which would appear at first sight to be a sudden upheaval, is the product of numerous causes, all of which can be traced with little difficulty. It is of course no isolated

phenomenon. Partly economic in character, partly an expression of a belief in political liberty, it is closely connected with general politics. Certain factors weigh more heavily with women than with men; but, roughly speaking, the causes and conditions which have made for the revival of the agitation for Woman Suffrage are just those which produced the change in the spirit of Parliament in 1906. While the Conservative Government had concentrated its attention upon the maintenance of power and prestige abroad, a vast sum of misery and discontent accumulated at home; and the triumph of the Liberals in 1906, exaggerated though it was by the internal dissensions of their opponents, represented a great change in the minds of the people as a whole. The improvement of economic conditions became the first business of Government. To this new conception of the State as an organization with power to remedy social evils was added a recovery of the belief in ideals in public life, a reaction against the immorality of Imperialism, and a replacing of righteousness in the category of national virtues. The spirit of liberty awoke not only in England, but in all parts of the world, and the concession of self-government to South Africa, followed by vast alterations of constitutional forms in Russia, in Turkey, in Persia, and in India, marked a change in the opinions of men which could not fail to be accompanied by a similar change in the opinions of women.

Both these new tendencies were emphasized in

the case of women by special conditions peculiar to themselves. The problems of housing, temperance, poor relief, sweated labour, and child life, which now occupied so large a part of the attention of the public, were problems with which women have a closer and a more painful acquaintance than men. More than one special grievance of women, especially the universal inferiority of their wages and salaries, was at the same time brought more vividly to notice largely by the exertions of women themselves. Everything thus tended to increase the interest which was taken by them in public affairs, and those who engaged in politics were seldom satisfied with indirect influence. But certain proposals which were made by prominent statesmen brought women more sharply into contact with the business of government, and reminded them that they were still in danger of injury by benevolent but egoistical legislation conducted by a Parliament of men. Few things did more to stimulate working women in their demand for enfranchisement than the threatened exclusion of married women from factories. Few women can object to enforced abstention from work in the weeks immediately preceding and following confinement, so long as some provision is made for maintenance during the interval. But actual proposals have gone much farther than this, and apart from the natural genius of the people, the suggestion that married women should be perpetually excluded from factories is the chief cause of the strength of the Suffrage movement in Lancashire and the North. Proposals

of this kind would be bad enough if they meant only the thrusting of an economically independent person back into dependence upon another. But a large proportion, perhaps the majority of the married women employed in factories are so engaged out of sheer economic necessity, their husbands being idle, drunken, sick, or out of work. To exclude such women must produce one of two consequences. Either they will starve, or they will enter those overcrowded, unhealthy, and ill-paid trades which are conducted outside the factories. In the last resort some of them will become prostitutes, the feminine equivalent of joining the ranks of the unemployed. If they were enfranchised their exclusion by legislative act would be of less than questionable wisdom. But to deprive them of their livelihood, against their will and without giving them a chance of protecting themselves by their votes, would be a monstrous exercise of tyranny. It may be questioned whether, in modern times, such a wholesale outrage has ever before been threatened against people of full age and understanding.

But even more potent than the state of England was the state of womanhood throughout the world. English women were no longer confined within the limits of their own country. The feminist movement was in full tide in all countries alike. The example set by England in education and industry had been followed even in countries so remote as Japan, and on every side the removal of disabilities marked the progress of the sex. Upon the idea of

self-government women had peculiar reason to fix their minds. Women were enfranchised in Wyoming in 1869, in Colorado in 1893, in Idaho and Utah in 1896, in New Zealand in 1893, in the Australian States at various times between 1894 and 1898, and in Finland in 1905.[1] This steady advance abroad, accompanied by great progress in education and in professional employment, gave an additional impetus to the cause at home. The emancipation of women had become international, and more than one association existed for strengthening the ties between the women of all civilized countries. The International Federation for the Abolition of State Regulation of Vice had been founded by Mrs. Josephine Butler. The International Women's Suffrage Alliance maintained the demand for the franchise. The International Council of Women, to which are now affiliated twenty-two National Councils, met regularly to deliberate upon all questions which affected women. The solidarity of the sex, the sense of common interests, of common rights, and of common duties was thus strengthened and confirmed by the constant exchange of ideas between women of all civilized nations. To those of us who look far ahead, this international aspect of feminism seems one of the most hopeful indications of the

[1] They have since been enfranchised in Norway (1907), Victoria (1908), Washington (1910) and California (1911). At the elections of 1912 four other of the United States pronounced in favour of Woman Suffrage, and the Lower House of the Danish Legislature has recently approved it by a huge majority.

future progress of the race. Internationalism among men may be for ever postponed by racial and economic jealousies. It may be that in the ties which are now being welded between women of all peoples are things more powerful than either. Perhaps it is not over rash to hope that by way of the sisterhood of woman we may arrive more quickly at the brotherhood of man.

These great economic and psychological currents were swollen by numerous tributaries. Improvements in education enormously increased the intellectual activity of the whole sex, and a national system of primary schools made vocal the discontent of working women. Still more powerful was the increase of the knowledge of physical facts, which opened the eyes of an increasing number of women to the spiritual and bodily evils which sprang from the soil of their inferiority. Mrs. Butler was seldom directly concerned in the agitation for the Suffrage. But her work has given it all its modern impulse, both at home and abroad. Of the women who come into contact with the results of vice, a majority will be found in the Suffragist camp. Those who cannot understand why the Suffrage movement has lately shown a new indignation and a new resentment, will find an explanation of it in the increase in the numbers of women doctors, of women engaged in the care of the sick, and of women who work, with open mind and heart, among the outcasts and the people of the abyss. To all these causes, concealed for the most part from the view of men of

affairs, must be ascribed the sudden appearance of Woman Suffrage on the surface of politics in 1906.

No attempt will be made here to calculate the exact numbers of Suffragists and Anti-Suffragists. It is true that a very large proportion of English women are indifferent whether they are franchised or not. When fifteen million girls have been bred up in the idea that they are not to take part in public affairs, it is not to be expected that a very large number of women will not believe it. So long as women know that public life is reserved for men, so long will many be content to remain outside it. Interest in politics, like Fame, is nourished by motion, and gathers strength in going. If Suffragists are to wait until the majority of women make a definite request for enfranchisement, they must wait for ever. If the pioneers of higher education had acted upon the same principle, the attitude of Mrs. Barbauld makes it clear that most women would have remained to this day where they were a hundred years ago. The agitation for the franchise is not singular in spreading from a few to many. What is far more significant than mere numbers is the character of the associations which support and oppose Woman Suffrage. The movement against enfranchisement, though it extends in some measure to working women, is in spirit essentially aristocratic. Its leaders are generally people of birth and fortune. Every manifesto, every appeal for funds, every list of speakers and officials bristles with the names of peers and peeresses

and the members of county families. The journals which support them are already identified with the causes of property and rank. Their strength lies in the Home Counties and the South, the strongholds of landed property and accumulated wealth. Every Suffragist who has done systematic work has found that opposition always increases in proportion to the ease of circumstances. People of birth and fortune are not of necessity either foolish or wicked. But they are of necessity far removed from any social problem with which they profess to deal. Very few of these Anti-Suffragists can have had any personal experience of the effects of sex inferiority. Economic independence has removed most of them from the necessity of engaging in any regular occupation. They have not been forced to earn a livelihood in the face of male jealousy, nor have they been compelled to choose between ill-paid industry and marriage as a means of subsistence. They have no first-hand acquaintance with sweated labour or prostitution. Nine-tenths of the experience upon which they theorize comes to them at one remove, coloured and distorted by the ease and comfort of their own surroundings. Their new zeal for the work of women in local government is characteristic of those who follow, but are themselves never pioneers. They belong to a class which has never taken the lead in any great social improvement of the last hundred years, but has lagged always in the rear of the army of civilization occupying with blaring trumpets and flaunting banners the position

which has last been won, at the moment when the main body leaves it to assault the next line of defence. When every possible allowance is made for the goodwill of the Anti-Suffragists, and for the eminent services which some of them have rendered to the public, they remain the very last women whose opinions upon the subject merit the attention of statesmen.

Upon the other side are ranged those classes upon whom any disability must press with most insistence. It is not, indeed, so easy to obtain the opinions of working women as of peeresses. As the field widens, the collection of facts becomes more difficult. But so far as they can be ascertained, the facts point to the support of Woman Suffrage being as strong in the poorer classes as it is weak in the more wealthy. The members of the Suffrage Societies are generally recruited from women who, in one occupation or another, are earning their own living, and the bulk of their support is to be found among working women of all degrees. Where women are little better than parasites, they display the characteristics of parasites. Where they are themselves workers, they are more vigorous, more independent, and more clear-sighted in their view of life; and as they are better acquainted with the effects of disability, so they are more insistent on the need for its removal. The women textile operatives of Lancashire have twice paid the expenses of a Parliamentary candidate. The Women's Co-

operative Guild, including 30,000 married women of the industrial class, and the National Union of Women Workers, which is closely in touch with women of the same type, have both given their official support. The Annual Conference of Head Mistresses of Girls' Schools has twice passed a Suffrage resolution. Among women employed in the Post Office and as teachers in elementary schools a large majority seems to be not only ready, but eager for enfranchisement. Most significant of all is the attitude of the women doctors. These are probably the most highly trained body of women in the world. They earn their own living in free and open competition, and their qualifications are such that they cannot be accused of hysteria, ignorance, excessive emotion, or any of the other vices which are supposed to warp the judgment of women. They come into close contact with the worst results of the subjection of women, and among them the Suffragists outnumber their opponents by thirty-five to one.

This strength of favourable opinion among working women, which is the common experience of all who have been engaged in the agitation of the last few years, is due to several causes. It springs naturally from that swift acknowledgment of abstract justice which characterizes the best of the working classes, whether men or women, and all persons who are engaged in regular labour. The more intelligent artisans, who are now the dominating influence in politics, are less hampered by

tradition and convention than the people who are called well-to-do; they discuss problems with greater freedom and sincerity; they arrive more boldly at conclusions. Among this class women have always enjoyed more real freedom than in more luxurious conditions of life. The mutual dependence of the two sexes has always been so obvious that the subjection of women has been less marked than elsewhere. Here there has always been a much franker comradeship between the sexes, and except where economic jealousy has intervened, a much more genuine recognition of the claims of women to equal opportunities. It is only where women have not been driven by economic conditions into active work, where they have been content to remain idle, and where men have been content to maintain them in idleness, that women have always found it difficult to assert their individuality. It is from the landowning, the professional, and the commercial classes that the bulk of the opposition to the women's movement has always come. Much less time and effort was required to gain an entrance for half a million women into the textile industry than to procure the admission of a single woman to the medical profession. But what is most noteworthy about the women who support Woman Suffrage is that those who work with brain or hand are those who are the greatest victims of any adverse social opinion, if it exist. They have had to struggle for adequate education and for the right to earn

their own living. They find themselves shouldered out of employment by men of less capacity than their own, and paid inferior wages for work of equal value. Many of them have wrestled with the temptation to prostitute themselves, either in marriage or on the streets, and from among these is still recruited the shameful army of the lost. These women encounter in a hundred forms the sexual jealousy which is never experienced or never realized by their opponents. Their opinion, indeed, would probably be sounder upon any subject of general political interest. But on the question whether women ought to have the Parliamentary vote or not, their opinion is of overwhelming authority. A vote is only a means of protection, a device for directly or indirectly redressing the grievances of the voter. To give way to the Anti-Suffragists is to prefer the voice of those who do not require protection to that of the very women who will suffer by the refusal of their demand. When women are divided, roughly speaking, in proportion to their necessities, no statesman can safely avoid the fact that those whose need is greatest, and especially those who are organized for the purpose of protecting their own interests, pronounce emphatically for enfranchisement.

The most remarkable feature of the new Suffrage movement is, of course, the unusual methods which have been deliberately adopted to promote it. The

final estimate of the militant tactics must be left to posterity. Posterity has an awkward habit of treating the excesses of reformers with indulgence, and of judging their opponents pretty strictly upon the merits of the case, and it is impossible to suppose that all the blame will rest upon one side. The militant Suffragists will certainly bear comparison with any other body of political enthusiasts. Some of their actions it is difficult to defend upon any ordinary principles. The interruption of speeches and the persecution of political opponents are not only bad in principle, but also foolish as tactics, and nothing can be said in defence of explosives, arson, the burning of letters, or the flinging of hatchets at Cabinet Ministers. But whatever may be said in condemnation of particular actions, the fact remains that until 1912 hardly a single one of their adversaries was the victim of more than a technical assault, while the women themselves suffered not only ridicule, contempt, and the prolonged mental distress of trial and imprisonment, but sometimes serious bodily injury and insult of the most atrocious kind. Of all the tragic contests between Progress and Order, none had been accompanied by less injury to the forces of the latter. It was idle to cry out upon the women who went to prison rather than enter into recognisances, and were maltreated by stewards only when they interrupted public meetings. The fact that they could have avoided suffering did not in the least diminish the value of the other fact that, from no base or unworthy motive, and after much

anxious deliberation, they entered upon a course of action which involved that suffering. The irritation which the plain man always feels at the perversity of martyrs does nothing to make martyrdom less deserving of respect. To those who say that the militant women were seeking for notoriety, mercenary or hysterical, one who knew them can only answer that they were not.[1] "Rational people do not do these things, therefore the militant Suffragists are not rational," is as fallacious a piece of reasoning as "Sane people do not commit suicide, therefore the deceased was insane, when he committed suicide." Strong feeling, concentrated upon a very genuine grievance and intensified by no little personal suffering, occasionally, but in the early stages of the movement very rarely, broke down restraint. The women selected for "danger duty" were, as a rule, women who could be trusted never to go beyond a definite limit, and very few of them ever, in fact, went beyond it. Whatever may be said in condemnation of militant methods, the entire absence of any attempt at personal injury in numerous encounters with the police testified to a high degree of discipline. Militant methods were an attempt to bring to the notice of the Government and the public the serious nature of the grievances of

[1] See on this point the letter of Mr. Herbert L. Carre-Smith, L.R.C.P., M.R.C.S., in the *Standard* of the 9th April, 1912. This opinion of an Anti-Suffragist, who is a competent medical man, and has specially studied the subject, is sufficient to dispose of the suggestion of mental disorder or hysteria.

women, but in such a way that no suffering should be incurred by any but the women themselves. Whatever praise or censure posterity may give to the movement, it can only hold that it expressed in its early stages a devotion and a sacrifice of self which have never been surpassed in the history of political enthusiasm.

Of the effect of these tactics upon the cause of Woman Suffrage there can be only one opinion. It may indeed be true that some honest support was lost, though it is equally true that very much of that support was not worth keeping. But no one who has been engaged in advocating Woman Suffrage during the last ten or twenty years can deny that, on the whole, the cause has been greatly strengthened. It has taken a new place in the House of Commons, in the Press, and on public platforms. Militant tactics played but a small part even in the activity of the militant Suffragists themselves. But they drew public attention to the whole question to a degree which had never been known before. Not only did the militant leaders find a steady and rapid increase in the number of their followers, but those who had conducted the constitutional agitation with waning courage and faltering hope received a great accession of strength. Every month since 1906 has seen an addition to the numbers of non-militant societies and their branches, to the amount of subscriptions, and to the list of meetings, and in spite of the irritation which has been aroused in certain quarters, there can be no

doubt that public interest is not only more widespread, but more favourable than it was seven years ago. The appearance of definite organizations, whose object it is to oppose Woman Suffrage, is the most significant proof that opinion in its favour has been vastly strengthened. The commission of a serious crime would have produced a very different result. But, quite apart from any effect which they may have had as advertisement, militant tactics, involving as they did a high degree of courage and self-abnegation in the women concerned, were directly responsible for the serious political consideration which the subject receives to day. The contrast between the flippant discussions of previous years and the grave deliberation of the debates in Parliament after 1909, is too marked to be misunderstood. The question of Woman Suffrage has been lifted to the plane of practical politics. This conclusion, whatever encouragement it may give to disorder on the part of disfranchised classes, is the only conclusion which can be drawn from the facts. This is not the first time that the blindness of legislators has compelled them to concede to a display of force what they might, without any loss of dignity, have once granted to reason and argument. That the force employed was originally of a comparatively harmless kind, was a piece of good fortune which few Governments have experienced. The lengths to which it has lately been pushed are to be traced directly to the want of wisdom in high places.

It would be as unprofitable to discuss the right-

ness or wrongness of militant methods as to discuss the rightness or wrongness of the execution of Charles I or the assassination of a Russian Minister. So far as the general public were concerned, the question was not a question of morals, but of expediency. Whether the militant women were right or wrong, it was the duty of the Government of the day to deal with them as a fact, and upon the manner of the Government's treatment of the problem depended the whole course of the Suffrage movement. The character of revolutions is invariably determined by the defence, not by the attack. Wise and judicious handling will avoid serious difficulties, foolish and precipitate action will only augment them. The Liberal Government of 1906 was certainly not wanting in opportunities for wisdom. They had a thousand examples before them in history, and they themselves had had no little experience of how to act in the face of political disorder. But so ignorant were they of the real nature of the militant movement, and so blind were they to the meaning of the changes of the preceding fifty years, that they committed almost every blunder possible to men in their situation. With the true channel clearly marked before them, and with the dangerous waters cumbered with the flotsam of their innumerable predecessors, they proceeded to run their ship with all sail set full upon the same deadly reef. No student of human affairs, interested in the art of government, could fail to derive much profitable

instruction from the incidents of the militant Suffrage movement. Though the scale of operations was comparatively small, precisely the same principles were at work as in every other period of political stress and agitation. The problem may be simply stated. Given some two or three millions of human beings with a grievance which they are unable by any constitutional method to redress, and given a small but determined section of them who proceed to methods of disorder of a comparatively harmless type, what is the duty of a Government, which is bound to maintain order, but bound also to mitigate the distress of which disorder is only one of many proofs?

In such a case the Government is bound to make certain inquiries, and upon the result of those inquiries depend not only its own immediate action, but the whole future of the agitation. The Government is bound to ask, "Who are the people concerned? What is their mental state? What is their previous record? Are they isolated, or are they supported, in principle at least, by a substantial number of others? Is this outbreak merely sporadic, or is it only one of a long train of events all pointing to a definite end?" It is always possible for wicked or foolish people to make disturbances in the public streets, and it may be almost as fatal for a Government to mistake a mob for a people as it is for it to mistake a people for a mob. The Gordon Riots were the result of an error of the first kind. The final state of the

militant Suffrage movement is a consequence of an error of the second kind. The Government of 1906 mistook the character of the women, the temper of their agitation, and the strength of their support, and it ignored the accumulating causes which had brought them into prominence. Perhaps the most striking proof of their failure to grasp the true nature of the problem was their constant fear of being blinded by vitriol, the weapon of the injured wife or the discarded mistress. The spectacle of Cabinet Ministers going about the country in dread of ferocious cruelty of this kind would have been almost ludicrous did it not indicate such a perilous ignorance of the facts. No better evidence could be required of the incurable sexuality of the masculine mind, of its inveterate disposition to regard a woman as a mere bundle of healthy or morbid sexual impulses, than this apprehension that political discontent should be expressed by the methods of erotic mania.

The folly of the Cabinet was indeed almost incredible. It was not that they refused to make immediate concessions. Ministers may, with perfect fairness, plead that they have been elected for certain purposes, that those purposes have not yet been fulfilled, and that they cannot fairly be called upon to adopt at once some cause which is highly controversial, involves a vast change in the Constitution, and was not in the present contemplation either of themselves or of their electors at the time when they were returned to power. The Govern-

ment might quite reasonably have postponed the matter until the conclusion of the special business for which they were elected in 1906. But they went much further. They refused to treat the matter as serious; they declined to make any definite promise that the matter would ever be taken up by themselves, or that they would ever allow a private member to do what they would not. They showed unmistakably that few of them regarded the subject as of any great importance, and that they were for the most part blind to the real nature of the grievances of disfranchised women. But hostility and apathy were the least of their blunders. When discontent had broken out into acts of trivial disorder, they repressed it with a severity which could only have been justified by the commission of serious crimes. Women of blameless character in everything but this, who at the worst were guilty of excessive enthusiasm in a good cause, were imprisoned among thieves and swindlers, compelled to wear prison clothes, and forced to perform the degrading tasks which were required of all but the lowest class of criminals.

The Government thus committed a fatal blunder. They deliberately neglected the warnings which the greatest of all political philosophers had given to some who had held office before them. It is inpossible for one who has followed the course of the Suffrage movement during the last few years to avoid turning with no little anger and regret to the pregnant sentences of Burke: "Nations are not

primarily ruled by laws; less by violence. Whatever original energy may be supposed either in force or regulation, the operation of both is, in truth, merely instrumental. Nations are governed by the same methods, and on the same principles, by which an individual without authority is often able to govern those who are his equals or his superiors; by a knowledge of their temper, and by a judicious management of it." And again: "Particular punishments are the cure for accidental distempers in the State; they inflame rather than allay those heats which arise from the settled mismanagement of the Government, or from a natural indisposition in the people. It is of the utmost moment not to make mistakes in the use of strong measures, and firmness is then only a virtue when it accompanies the most perfect wisdom." And yet again: "Lawyers, I know, cannot make the distinction for which I contend; because they have their strict rule to go by. But legislators ought to do what lawyers cannot; for they have no other rules to bind them, but the great principles of reason and equity, and the general sense of mankind. These they are bound to obey and follow; and rather to enlarge and enlighten law by the liberality of legislative reason, than to fetter and bind their higher capacity by the narrow construction of subordinate, artificial justice."

Ministers, indeed, did everything that they should not have done. The statesman who regards civil

disturbances merely as threats is no more deserving of office than a sixth-form schoolboy. To the wise they are not threats, but symptoms. Disorders of a local and temporary character may be suppressed without evil consequences. But disorders which are widespread and persist in spite of punishment cannot be ascribed to petulance or malice. They are invariably the last resort of virtue. They require the utmost tact and discretion in government, and mere application of the law is useless. Nothing is easier than by undue severity to convert the enthusiast into the fanatic, and the fanatic into the criminal. No Government can suppress such an agitation, it can only temper it, and a pedantic administration of legal rules is the worst of all possible politics. Law is always a matter of compulsion. But it is the business of the governor to manage and not to compel his people, and the law should be the last, as it is always the weakest of his instruments. If he can find, for the moment, no other remedy, he must at least apply this with the least possible severity.

The Government were not ignorant of the right principle, though they entirely failed to apply it. Concession of a substantial kind would have proved as complete a remedy in England as on a larger scale it has proved in India and in Ireland. It would not have been necessary for the Government to promote a Bill of their own. It would probably have been sufficient if they had allowed the House of Commons a full opportunity of carrying a private measure into law. But even if this had not been

enough to satisfy the most extreme of the militant women, it would have deprived their agitation of all its reality. The sanction of every peaceable and orderly Suffragist would at once have been withdrawn from the militant methods if it had once appeared that the Government took a serious view of the problem, and were willing to allow the Legislature a fair opportunity of settling it. But the attitude of the Government, while it gave every encouragement to further disorder, gave no assistance to those who wished to confine the agitation within more reasonable bounds, and so deprived their own methods of repression of every shred of moral justification. Large numbers of men and women who found their appeals to reason no more effective than violent breaches of the law were deprived of every pretext which they would otherwise have had for urging their associates to restrain themselves. Of the guilt of provoking excesses which it was within their power to avoid, or at least to mitigate, the Government must partake in full measure. He who refuses everything is not to protest that the demands made upon him are extravagant.

Excessive punishment of trifling disorders, combined with neglect to redress or even to realize the existence of a grievance, had its natural effect, and provoked disorders which were not trifling. Until August, 1909, the women had confined themselves to technical assaults and harmless obstruction of the police, and the amount of the damage which they

had inflicted was practically nothing. Even when they were smarting under a thousand indignities, when they had experienced not a little violence and brutality at the hands of mobs, of stewards at meetings, and even, in rare instances, of policemen, and had been exasperated by the mockery and contempt of Members of Parliament, the unlawful acts which they committed had hitherto been such as could result in no personal injury. They now proceeded to offences of a more serious character. They flung stones, sometimes enclosed in letters or notices, through the windows of halls where meetings were being held, or through those of post offices or other public buildings. Even these stones were not at first thrown recklessly. Generally every care was taken that no human being should be struck.[1] It is true that acts like these were more serious than loitering on the Prime Minister's doorstep, or attempting to push through a line of policemen. But the Government and the public proceeded to greater lengths of folly than they had yet reached. The new policy was treated as further evidence of mental derangement, and an opportunity soon presented itself of doing what unintelligent fear always does in a time of political stress. The women who were imprisoned resolved that, rather than submit to the degradation of imprisonment as common criminals in the second division, they

[1] I have only been able to discover one case of a man being hurt—at Manchester. This was after forcible feeding had begun.

would starve. They began to refuse the prison food. For some time the officials were in a quandary. Several women, guilty of minor offences, were released after a few days' imprisonment, when starvation had brought them to the verge of death. Suffragists thought that the public would at last recognize that a cause which could call forth such an astonishing spirit of devotion in its supporters was a good cause, and that the Government would at last be brought to consider it in a serious spirit. But they were wrong. The extreme of self-sacrifice was regarded as only another manifestation of hysteria. Mr. Herbert Gladstone displayed all the resolution of weakness, and determined that sentences imposed for stone-throwing should be served in full. After a serious disturbance had taken place at Birmingham he ordered that women who refused to eat should be fed by force.

This forcible feeding took one of two forms. Where the resistance was merely nominal it consisted of nothing worse than the application of a feeding-cup to the lips of the prisoner. In more determined cases it was a process of a most revolting character. The prisoner was held down by two or more wardresses. A long india-rubber tube was inserted in the nose or mouth and pushed down into the stomach. The medical officer then poured liquid nourishment down the tube. Vomiting frequently followed the operation, the throat and nostrils of the prisoner were swollen and inflamed, and in many cases release was followed

by prolonged illness and prostration. The mental condition which was produced was even more horrible than the physical, and if the women had been violated in their cells by order of the Government, they could hardly have been filled with a deeper sense of degradation, or their associates with a fiercer resentment. Regarded simply as a measure of prison discipline, the system should have been adopted with gravity and seriousness. By the House of Commons and by the public it was regarded as a new and splendid jest, and every attempt at protest was greeted with laughter and contempt. Mr. Gladstone went through the solemn farce of himself submitting to the operation, and declared that he found nothing unpleasant in it, ignoring the fact that the willingness of the patient entirely changed its character.[1]

If the thing was bad in itself, from the point of view of policy it was the worst thing which the Government could have done. The argument that those who commit offences in the course of political agitations should be treated differently from ordinary criminals does not depend solely upon subtle moral distinctions, though the motive of the offender, considered in its relation to the magnitude of the actual offence, must to some extent mitigate the punishment. But the argument is

[1] For an account of the effects of forcible feeding on the minds and bodies of the women, see the article by Sir Victor Horsley, Dr. Mansell-Moullin, and Dr. Agnes Savill in the *Lancet* of the 24th August, 1912.

based as much upon considerations of expediency as upon those of justice. The criminal in the one case is an isolated offender. In the other he is one of a large and organized body, all united by some common enthusiasm, and all indirectly affected by every indignity which is inflicted upon their companion. If the society is in its aims directly hostile to the community at large, this fact of representative suffering can have no weight with the guardians of law and order. The danger of increasing discontent may be the least of possible evils; though even here, repression must always be accompanied by attempts to conciliate the moderate party. But when the organization is formed for a good purpose, or for a purpose which is regarded with favour by a large section, if not a majority of the general public, and when the particular disorders have caused little or no substantial injury, then it is the height of folly in a Government to administer punishment of a harsh, humiliating, or degrading kind. The whole class is at once roused to indignation. Violence begets violence, and the excessive vigour of repression is followed by increased vigour of revolt. A generous and impersonal hatred of wrong is converted into a bitter personal hatred of members of the Government. The whole agitation is poisoned and corrupted in spirit, and the administration, which by the exercise of tact and discretion might have kept it within reasonable limits, finds itself confronted by a determined conspiracy, capable of inflicting irreparable harm before it is repressed.

If the agitation is not sporadic, but springs from some profound economic or spiritual wrong, then the action of the Government can only produce a long and discreditable struggle, ending in the triumph of the reformers, and the perpetuation of a festering hostility which more gentle management might have avoided.

All these consequences followed immediately upon the adoption of the policy of forcible feeding. The temper of the Suffrage movement changed at once. The flame of revolt burned more fiercely than before, and it kindled anger in large numbers of men and women who had never approved of militant methods. Among the militant women themselves the Government ceased to be regarded merely as the instrument of an obnoxious system. What had been the disposition of a few enthusiasts became that of the whole body. The Prime Minister and the Home Secretary appeared at once in the light of personal enemies, and the justice of their assassination became almost a commonplace of discussion. Such an action would have done irreparable harm to the cause of Woman Suffrage. It was certainly not contemplated by the responsible leaders of any organization. But the atmosphere of assassination existed. Any woman who committed such a deed would know that she would gain no little favour among large numbers of her associates by taking the life of a man who was responsible for so much shame and suffering. The assault on Mr. Churchill at Bristol, unauthorized

though it was, was greeted with cordial approval by many men and women who, six months before, would have denounced it. Upon the top of forcible feeding itself came the turning of a hosepipe upon a woman in Strangeways Prison at Manchester, and the refusal of Mr. Gladstone to confront officials with prisoners who charged them with abuse of authority. The whole question was drifting steadily towards a catastrophe when the dissolution of Parliament in 1909 put an end to the militant campaign. A change in the Cabinet replaced Mr. Gladstone by a man of a different calibre. Endowed by nature with a more powerful imagination than his predecessor, and warned by personal experience of the disastrous consequences to be expected from persistence in his policy, Mr. Churchill introduced new rules into the code of prison regulations. Of the wisdom of this new policy, which was approved by Mr. Gladstone himself, it is hardly necessary to speak. The reasonableness of Governments is too precious a thing to be criticized on the ground of delay. It need only be pointed out that the change destroyed the whole case which had previously been made out for imprisonment in the second division and for forcible feeding. The defence of the Government had hitherto been that they were bound to administer the law strictly and impartially, that they could make no inquiry into the motives of those who committed a breach of the peace, that they could not discriminate between those whose unlawful acts arose from a sense of political grievance and

those who were turbulent out of sheer malice. The new prison regulations tore all this political sophistry to tatters, and replaced expediency, the calculation of the remote consequences of acts of State, to its right place in the science of government.

The wisdom of the Cabinet seems to have stopped at this point, and their treatment of the Conciliation Bill of 1910 gave little hope of a peaceful settlement of the question. Parliament had such an opportunity as it will probably never have again. When the Bill was introduced there was a complete cessation of militant action, an unusual absence of competing business. The Prime Minister had deliberately laid the subject before the electors prior to the election. The Government was required to make no sacrifice of principle, but simply to allow the House of Commons, if it pleased, to pass a Suffrage Bill in the ordinary way. The Government permitted the House to read the Bill a second time, and declined to give it further facilities. Having thus done everything they could to inspire distrust, they proceeded, later in the year, to increase their difficulties by a new abuse of their executive power. In November another deputation was sent by the Women's Social and Political Union to the Prime Minister. It was stopped as usual. But on this occasion allegations were made against the police which demanded the strictest public investigation. The charges were not only of excessive violence and brutality but, in twenty-nine cases, of gross

and horrible indecency. They were brought, not by the militant women, but by the Committee of Members of Parliament of all parties which was promoting the Suffrage Bill. They were supported by independent witnesses of unquestioned respectability. Many of the women who complained are known to the writer, personally or by reputation, to be incapable of fabricating charges of this kind. Mr. Ellis Griffith, K.C., and Lord Robert Cecil, K.C., lawyers of experience and credit, examined some of them, and came to the conclusion that the accusations were made in good faith. There was nothing in the general circumstances of the case to make their truth improbable. The women had never before made statements of this kind. The police who had been accustomed to deal with them were at the time engaged in Wales, and they had been handled on this occasion by men who were brought for the purpose from the lowest quarters of London. The actual evidence was collected not by the women's organization, but by the Parliamentary Committee, and in the first place against the women's expressed wish. Everything made it wise and just that the Home Secretary should make a public investigation into the whole matter. Mr. Churchill did what no wise or just man could have done. He not only expressed his confidence in the police, but, without making any inquiry of anybody except the police themselves, and without examining a single one of the witnesses tendered to him by the Committee, went out of his way to describe the

charges as false and the Women's Social and Political Union as "a copious fountain of mendacity." When the representative of the State in such a case displays the vicious temper of a partisan, the historian is bound to exercise his judgment. It is impossible to believe that the women deliberately invented the charges against the police, and procured the support of so many respectable persons for complaints which had no foundation in fact. Without, in the absence of sifted evidence, condemning any particular officer, posterity must conclude that in substance the charge against the police is true. The one person for whom no defence can be made out is Mr. Churchill. Power has not been so shamelessly abused in the United Kingdom since the affair of Mitchelstown.[1]

After this affair the movement seemed to advance rapidly. The Liberal party, always hostile to the limited measures which had been before Parliament, seemed ready to accept a Bill of a more extensive character, and even Cabinet Ministers came openly forward to repair the consequences of their previous evasion and delay. But at the end of 1911 the cause received a heavy blow from those

[1] The whole case is stated in the pamphlet *Treatment of Women's Deputations by the Metropolitan Police.* Similar charges were recently made against the police in connection with the London Dock Strike. Mr. McKenna at once granted a full public inquiry. The working men had votes. The women had not. It is in the course of a struggle for the franchise that we come most vividly to realize how much it is worth.

who had hitherto done most and spent most to serve it. The danger of militant tactics had always been that they should be made an end in themselves, and that those who employed them should become unable to see when and where they ceased to be profitable. The balance between good and bad was finally depressed on the wrong side when Mr. Lloyd George's speech to the National Liberal Federation at Bath was interrupted. He was actually about to speak in favour of Woman Suffrage. He was the most influential man in his party, which was the party in power. Representatives from all parts of the country were at the meeting. It was not certain that he would be able to make them enthusiastic for the cause. But it was certain that he could do much, and more than any other man in England, to make them sympathetic. His speech could not produce anything but a favourable result. But the militant suffragists supposed that to embarrass a man whom they had had reason to suspect was to assist the cause for which they had made such great sacrifices. The speech was spoiled by interruptions, and the Liberal delegates dispersed, hostile where they had been indifferent, and in despair where they had been friendly. This action of the Suffragists was the action of people who were incapable of estimating the political consequences of what they did, and the breaking of shop windows in the following March was an even less significant expression of their want of practical wisdom. The Conciliation Bill was probably

already doomed, and even the very great exertions of the non-militant societies could hardly have overcome the influence of party. The defeat of the Bill in 1911 surprised nobody who was acquainted with the state of opinion in the House of Commons, and the militant excesses did no more than provide moral weaklings with a convenient excuse for violating their pledges. The fate of this and all future Bills was settled by the announcement of a Government Franchise Bill, and those members who were unable or unwilling to make up their own minds, rejoiced in the promised guidance of the Whips. Never again would they be without the pretext that their votes were directed by their sense of what was convenient to the Premier or consistent with their support of the official programme.

One thing only could compensate the cause for the defeat of the Conciliation Bill and the complication of the issue by the introduction of the Franchise Bill. This was provided by Mr. McKenna, and if the folly of Suffragists had impaired their chances of success, that of the Home Secretary did much to restore them. The exact measure of his wisdom is the increased violence with which the agitation has since been conducted. Assaults on Ministers have been more frequent and more dangerous, and from the breaking of glass we have already come to attempts at arson and murder. Precisely the same consequences have followed the new excess of severity as had followed it three years before. Mr. Gladstone had at least the excuse that

he was taken by surprise. Mr. McKenna had recent, as well as historical, experience to guide him. He did everything he should not have done, and in the worst possible way. He began by refusing Suffragist prisoners even the benefit of the new prison rules, and was only thrust into wisdom by prodigious exertions on the part of friends of liberty and good government. On a second occasion he removed the three leaders, who were sentenced for conspiring to break windows, to the first division, and kept their followers, whom they had used as tools in their conspiracy, in the second. One prisoner was released because her brother, without her knowledge, promised the Home Secretary that she would not repeat the offence. The rest, whose relations were less influential, were kept in prison. Where the strictest impartiality, even in undue severity, was required by all the circumstances, Mr. McKenna showed himself in the last degree arbitrary and capricious. To add to the odium with which he was regarded, he revived the stupid and brutal policy of forcible feeding. No end was gained by his policy, not even that public order which is the object of all government. The militant women are as unconquerable as ever. Breaches of the law are more serious and no less frequent. The sufferings of the prisoners even regained for them that moral support of their constitutional associates which their rash and ill-considered policy had forfeited, and for the first time a definite attack was made on the Government's policy in the House

of Commons. More than a hundred members signed a memorial on behalf of the prisoners, and a formal motion was made for the reduction of Mr. McKenna's salary.[1] But if Parliament had been at last roused to a sense of its duty, the militant women had forgotten theirs. An attempt to set fire to Mr. Harcourt's house, the flinging of a hatchet into Mr. Asquith's carriage, and an attempt to burn down a theatre in which Mr. Asquith was announced to speak showed that attempts to mitigate the Government's severity had begun too late. The women, who were once careful at least to do nothing in the way of personal injury, have been driven into a recklessness which knows no control. The Government are now left to face the consequences of their own folly and brutality, which is not less blameworthy because the latest excesses of the women are not to be excused either on moral grounds or from the point of view of expediency.

The collapse of the Franchise Bill of 1913 is a fitting climax to the Government's blundering record. No one, who knew anything of the minds of Members of Parliament, expected that the vote on the Woman Suffrage amendments to that Bill would be an open vote. The party Whips were removed, but the party spirit stalked the Lobby

[1] This was chiefly due to the exertions of the National Political League, a non-militant society. Apart from its practical effect, which was very small, the motion is evidence of a great increase in the importance attached to the question by Members of Parliament.

in their stead. It was nothing that Mr. Asquith had pledged himself to allow his followers to vote as they pleased. It was freely alleged, and Mr. Churchill and Mr. Harcourt had used the suggestion to the utmost, that the Premier would resign if the amendments were carried. Irish members fearful for Home Rule, Welsh members fearful for Disestablishment, and members of all nationalities who were fearful for their seats, for their salaries, for their favour with their leaders, or honestly for those feelings of Mr. Asquith which he himself declared were not in question, would have voted or abstained from voting, on grounds which had nothing to do with Woman Suffrage. Such a ludicrous spectacle of perturbation has seldom been witnessed in Parliament, and the sight of these legislators, stripped of the protection of the party mantle, and exposed, naked and tender, to the sharp thrusts of original principles, would have been infinitely amusing to the philosopher, had it not been so grievously unedifying to the public. The Speaker's ruling that the amendments could not be added to the Bill released many members from a moral dilemma which to men of candour and courage would have been no dilemma at all, and saved such of them as were on the point of violating their pledges to the women from indelible shame.

It is only necessary here to add a statement of the present position of affairs. The Franchise Bill, for which in itself there was no substantial public demand, was introduced for the express purpose

of meeting the requirements of those Liberal and Labour members who declined to support the Conciliation Bill. It was to give an opportunity for the enfranchisement of women on a wide basis. It was to have the full weight of the Government's authority behind it, if the Woman Suffrage amendment were carried, and the Parliament Act was to be used, if necessary, to overcome the resistance of the House of Lords. The effect of the introduction of this Bill by the Government was to destroy the chances of the Conciliation Bill, and the defeat of the latter in 1912 was in no small measure due to the public promise of the former. Now that the Government's Bill has followed the Conciliation Bill, the women are offered the chance of a second Private Bill, with no promise of Government support at any time, no promise of the aid of the Parliament Act, and no promise even that the Government will remain in office long enough for that Act to operate in favour of a Private Bill. Except that Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Lloyd George are definitely committed to active support, and that many Liberals labour under an uneasy conviction that the women have been shabbily treated, the Parliamentary position is no better than it was two years ago. The Labour Party has now definitely resolved to oppose any Franchise Bill which extends the franchise to men without including women, so that we shall perhaps escape the additional obstacle of one of those half reforms which block the way of whole reforms. Even the loss of the Franchise Bill is a

proof that the women's movement is strong enough to embarrass a Government in the House of Commons, and to force it to drop a measure of the first class. But there is little in the language of Ministers and Members which encourages women to suppose that during Mr. Asquith's leadership they can rely upon the honest support even of their professed adherents. They must face an indefinitely long prospect of labour and expenditure, outrage and retaliation. The movement is now too far advanced to be stopped, and the organization of opinion in the country will soon overcome the obstacles which party chicanery and Suffragist fanaticism have erected for the reinforcement of honest opposition. If the temper with which the agitation will be conducted will seem not of the gentlest, the blame will not rest upon the shoulders of the women. The Parliaments and the Cabinets of 1906 and 1910 probably contained a larger proportion of disinterested public servants than any of their predecessors. But in their dealings with Woman Suffrage, in their ignorance of facts, in their inability to understand the discontent with which they were faced, and in the levity with which they contemplated the immediate consequences of their neglect, they could not have been surpassed by the most profligate assembly that ever sat at Westminster.

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Printed by BUTLER & TANNER, *Frome and London.*

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on 15 October, 2018